LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

INSIGHTS FROM CHARLES SPURGEON'S CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING FOR A

CHANGING CUTURE

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THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

APPLYING CHARLES SPURGEON'S METHOD OF CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING

FOR A CHANGING CULTURE.

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This project has been done in order to increase the amount of literature available that demonstrates how to preach to a 21st century culture and to enlighten preachers to the timeless truths that transcend from the great 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon. A close evaluation of Charles Spurgeon's biblical preaching reveals a model for pastors to emulate in a post-modern context in the local church. Spurgeon was a master communicator and a survey of his mid to late 1800's preaching reveals those areas of his ministry that are still useful in the New Millennium. By reviewing Spurgeon's sermons and writings, pastors can learn from and effectively apply today many of the methods and techniques that were utilized by this great preacher over a century ago.

Abstract length: 125 words.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a tension that is growing between church and culture. That tension has opened

the door for movements that question the practices and preaching of the ecclesiology of the

established church. One such movement has introduced in the past few years and has gained

much attention from conservative evangelicals such as John MacArthur. MacArthur shares his

main concern with the movement and its leader by stating the heart of the movement's theology:

> The most recent battle being waged in the evangelical church is one related to the
> perspicuity of Scripture. Within the larger context of the Emerging Church Movement is
> the Emergent Church, Church, whose leading spokesman is Brian D. McLaren. Because
> of his prominence as a leader of both the Emergent Church and the Emerging Church
> Movement, what he says about the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture needs to be
> scrutinized. McLaren undermines the clarity of Scripture by questioning whether biblical
> doctrine can be held with certainty. He questions the clarity of Scripture by needlessly
> introducing complexity into biblical interpretation. He further dismisses scriptural clarity
> by questioning the possibility of deriving propositional truth from the Bible. Also, his
> refusal to abide by the Bible's emphasis on the exclusive nature of the Christian gospel
> raises questions about the Bible's clarity. McLaren's pointed criticism of conservative
> evangelicals who insist on the clarity of Scripture is another indication of his disdain for
> the perspicuity of Scripture. McLaren's position on the perspicuity of Scripture is clearly
> at odds with what the Bible itself says about its own clarity.[1]

There is an increasing line being drawn from culture to the context of the Bible. This line

may also be considered a chasm or great divide. This divide has created awareness in the

preaching community about the need for sermon evaluation and establishing basic principles in

homiletics in order to address the changing needs of culture. Many refer to this culture as

postmodern. In the days to come, preachers/teachers will have to answer the question of whether

or not they are bridging the gap between an ancient text and a modern methodology. Combining

this need for evaluation with a comparison of one of the preaching greats (Charles Haddon

Spurgeon) and the battle with modernism in the 19th Century will give cognizance to the "Bridge

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[1] MacArthur, John. 2006. "Perspicuity of Scripture: the emergent approach." Master's Seminary Journal 17, no. 2: 141-158. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 13, 2012).

Builder" of the 21st Century. The benefit of probing the life, ministry, writings, and preaching of Spurgeon are unique in that he was an innovator of his time in preaching. His accomplishments make him an esteemed resource for this project

The Statement of the Problem

So that a restored sense of methodology can be retained in preaching, an expression of culture must first be considered. The current cultural environment is changing according to many of the studies under consideration for this project. A closer look at these trends will reveal a need to expose a methodology in preaching that speaks to the expanding gap between the ancient text of the Bible and current society. This gap must be narrowed to adjoin the message of the Bible to the society. One of the terms that will be used throughout the project is "building bridges." This refers to the process of relating the ancient text of scripture to contemporary society and its language. This phrase comes from John Stott and his book *Between Two Worlds*. Another phrase that will be used is *social networking or social media*. This refers to the media used for social interaction between peer groups. Popular social networks are Facebook, Twitter, Smart Phones, and Skype. The projects hub is *Charles Haddon Spurgeon* and his approach to preaching. From this point forward any reference to Spurgeon or Charles Spurgeon is a mention of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon refused the title of Reverend and had no formal title due to academic achievements. Further the terms current *culture* and *postmodern* will be used interchangeably. These terms are synonymous in this project. Two other terms that are used interchangeably in this project are biblical and expository preaching. While these terms can have different nuances, for purposes of this project they refer to the event of preaching.

In this project there are scriptures that will be inserted. Unless footnoted, these passages will come from the New American Standard Bible which may be referenced as the NASB. If

another version is used it will be noted; for example the Amplified version will be noted as AMP. Where no note is provided the NASB will be used. Along with these abbreviations will be the use of EMC to replace Emergent Church Movement, EC to replace The Emerging Church, and EV to replace The Emergent Village.

The Statement of Limitations

As a consequence to the proposed methodology, it will be difficult to measure the effectiveness of the methodology developed in every local church. This project is specifically designed for the local church pastor. While this will mostly benefit First Baptist Church Maysville, it cannot be said that the method of presentation will be utilized in every context such as crusade or mass evangelism strategies. The success or failure of this approach to preaching will only be determined over a period of time. The influence that Spurgeon had during modernism can be evaluated due to the overwhelming amount of influence he had. Another consequence is that the language barrier with Victorian England and Twenty First Century America is difficult to translate. This method is a consequence of personal growth and maturity as a young preacher in a changing culture.

The Theoretical Basis for the Project

The basis for the project comes from the understanding of scripture and the exhortation for proclamation in the Bible. Many of the biblical concepts or phrases associated with preaching are: "to tell the good news" (Luke 1:19), "to be a herald or announcer" (Matthew 3:1), and "proclaim the message" (2 Timothy 4:2). The most common of these is "to be a herald or announcer." The preacher is considered a herald of the good news. There is proclamation with the good news as its object or content of heralding.

The Bible offers many orientations into preaching and its purpose. One of the most

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noteworthy is 2 Timothy 4:2," preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Paul's instruction is assumed that the word is to be preached, whether it is convenient or not. Another of these describes a substantial command that Christ gave the disciples prior to His ascension," [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Luke also records these final instructions," [8] but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Here in the New Testament Christ left the final directive to" make disciples" by "teaching" His commands and the disciples are to be "witnesses" to what they have seen and heard.

More New Testament passages teach the idea and importance of preaching. Like 1 Corinthians 1:21 and 23," [21] For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. [23] but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness." Here Paul gives the conjecture that Christ will be preached to so that people can come to know God through the exposure of the Bible. Paul once again describes the content of the message in 2 Corinthians 4:5," [5] For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." The New Testament is satiated with passages about the need for preaching in all cultures, Jew and Gentile.

Acts surveys Paul's apologetic in his sermon on Mars Hill. This sermon covers the essential elements of preaching in a cultural setting. Paul's sermon serves as a pattern for preaching today and is a basis for this project because of the similarities between him and

Charles Spurgeon:

> [22] So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. [23] For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; [25] nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; [26] and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, [27] that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; [28] for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' [29] Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. [30] Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, [31] because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.[2]

 Paul lectured on the confused worship in Athens. Peter earlier in the book spoke in defense of

the same message:

> I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, [35] but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. [36] The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— [37] you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. [38] *You know of* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. [39] We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. [40] God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, [41] not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. [42] And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. [43] Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.[3]

Peter gives the entire gospel (good news) of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. In both

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[2] Acts 17:22-31

[3] Acts 10:34-43

instances, these men never circumvented the message of Christ in an apprehensive environment. The theory of this project is based on the biblical mandate to preach or proclaim Christ to all people in all cultures.

While the current labor is to bridge the gap between postmodernism, the labor that Spurgeon focused on was combating the heresies in modernism. A comparison reveals some similar features between the two. Victorian England provided a backdrop for comparison. Spurgeon was combating the nuisances of modernism and the Catholic Church from earlier periods such as the Sixteenth Century. This comparison provides a basis for the project.

The Statement of Methodology

As stated the problem faced in preaching today is to provide a conduit for preaching of an ancient text and contemporary culture to connect. This project is designed to provide an origin for this conduit by looking at the preaching theory and practice of Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon's preaching will reveal a suitable methodology for the preacher found in the Twenty-first Century local church.

The project begins with an introduction that provides some key summaries of the paper. The introduction offers the statement of the problem, which describes the question that is to be answered. The next section is the statement of limitations. This is the items that cannot be addressed in the project or that are not part of the project. The introduction also offers the theoretical basis for the project which consists of biblical reference and support. The methodology employed is revealed here in this portion and described. The conclusion of the introduction is an evaluation of each of the main sources used, books and internet articles. The introduction provides a concise summary of the project as a whole.

The first chapter offers the requisite for more information regarding preaching in the current postmodern culture. This section provides a survey of what postmodern is and defines preaching as it relates to culture. On page 26 George Barna's article on trends in the church today provides a foundation for the cultural awareness in the project. Barna's research reveals "Six Mega Themes" that infuse the church. This research provides an impression of what needs to be focused on in preaching. The "Six Mega Themes" reveal: "the Christian church is becoming less theologically literate"; "the church is becoming more ingrown and there is less outward focus"; "people are less concerned about spiritual principles and are more concentrated on practical solutions for life"; "Christians are more interested in contributing to the social needs and concerns of the community". "The postmodern influence of tolerance is invading the church"; and "the Christian influence on society and culture is obsolete." Cultural change requires an investigation into the practice of preaching and its influence. After cultural awareness, chapter 1 defines preaching by men such as John Stott, Jerry Sutton and Spurgeon himself beginning on page 38. The first chapter also offers Charles Spurgeon as an adequate model for preaching in a cultural of challenges, by citing his own challenges with modernism in the 1800's. This first chapter gives detailed material into the general ministry of Spurgeon.

The second chapter considers the background of Spurgeon and the influences on his preaching and life. Spurgeon began preaching at a young age, and therefore gained tremendous experience through life and ministry that certainly inspired him throughout his time. He received much criticism as a young preacher, but also continued to receive criticism for the remainder of his ministry largely due to his flamboyant personality. The second chapter evaluates Spurgeon's autobiography and provides research into his background and formation. The autobiography allows one to here from Spurgeon directly what influenced him and how he viewed ministry.

The third chapter evaluates closely Spurgeon's practice and theory of preaching. The series of lectures and sermons to his students provide the foundation of the preaching philosophy of Spurgeon. There is also a glance into some of his sermons and the Christ-centered approach that he had. Spurgeon made it a point of great emphasis to retain doctrinal prominence in all he spoke and preached. Much of this report begins on page 86 with the articles from Pitts and Skinner. Spurgeon offers the most research in *Lectures to My* Students on page 93 and following. Most of the research in chapters two and three come directly from Spurgeon's own writings and reviews of his sermons. This provides the example the project needed to form a methodology for preaching in view of cultural change.

The final chapter which contains the conclusion to the project also provides the suggested methodology to preaching. In addition to the emphasis on Spurgeon, additional insight is used from Jerry Sutton's book, *A Primer on Biblical Preaching*. Sutton, who mentions Spurgeon in his book, suggests some main ingredients for a noble sermon. These ingredients are found beginning on page 117. Spurgeon's passion for the fight against culture can be exemplified in his book *An All Round Ministry* on page 123. Once these ingredients have been considered along with the theory of Spurgeon's evangelistic herald style preaching, a summarized methodology is suggested for use in the local church. There are seven steps offered as a methodology for bridging the chasm between the ancient text and culture. The first is to *research the culture in which one lives*. The second is to *speak the language of the common people*. Third the goal is to *preach Christ as central to the message*. Fourth is to *preach with as few notes as possible*. The fifth step is to *not shy away from using doctrinal and theological expression as the emphasis*. The sixth step is to *illustrate the message with modern examples and metaphors*. The last step is a question that Spurgeon enlisted," *will this message glorify God*?" This summary is not meant

to be a treatise on homiletical theory, it is meant to be a universal thought development into preaching, while considering cultural change.

The Literature Review

Books

There will be a number of resources used in this project. The first book that was helpful in defining the need for a preaching analysis regarding culture is *Between Two Worlds* by John Stott. This book is a classic in preaching and homiletical reference. The overarching emphasis is placed on closing the gap between the Bible and culture. The book was written in 1982, but still provides key insight for today's preacher.

The next book that provided key insight was *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larsen. This book is a culmination of many preachers and their key insights into preaching. This book offers definitions of biblical and expository preaching; along with analysis into the preaching and defines of Charles Spurgeon's method. The book is a valuable resource that covers all areas of preaching and provides support from different viewpoints.

The book *A Primer On Biblical Preaching* by Jerry Sutton was surveyed and offered many thoughts. Sutton who has experience in preaching and academia has done wide-ranging research on preaching and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. His book has Spurgeon influence and is a result of his homiletics classes. It offers respected views into the field of preaching.

Albert Mohler Jr.'s *He Is Not Silent* was used for a variety of reasons. The book addresses the subject of preaching and culture. Second the book discourses the need for doctrinal preaching in view of the cultural shift. Lastly the book has a significant portion on Spurgeon near the close of the book. The book offered treaties in all areas of the project.

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The books by Charles Spurgeon himself offer the most insight into his ministry itself. There were several books utilized that were written by Spurgeon in the project. This makes the project unique in that it has so many primary sources such as; *An All Round Ministry* which is Spurgeon's address's to his students from Spurgeon's college. These were given at an annual conference. This series of messages were to combat the heresies that modern thought had plagued the church with as well as the immorality that had infested England during the Nineteenth Century. This book is not as much about mechanics as it is about making Christ the central point of every message and preaching the essentials of the faith.

The next series of books provided richness into the life and ministry of Spurgeon. These were his own words in most cases about his life, influences, and approach to preaching. The books were originally a four volume diary that has been acquired for the project with some additional notes from sermons and the ministry. The newer editions contain clear and well organized thoughts of Spurgeon with a plethora of biographical information. These volumes are: *Autobiography, Volume I: The Early Years. Autobiography, Volume II: The Full Harvest*. , *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: His Diary, Letters, and Records*. Vol. 4.

There is not a more detailed account of the mechanics and theory of preaching found on Spurgeon rather than *Lectures to My Students*. This series of classroom lectures contain the inner thoughts of Spurgeon about preaching and covers topics from the call to preaching to the types of commentaries that one should use in their studies, this Spurgeon's homiletics book for the time period.

No study of Spurgeon would be complete without studying his sermons themselves. In the project three main resources were used that framed Spurgeon's messages. While there are more extensive collections available, these proved to contain more than an adequate amount of

his sermons for analysis. The primary books for this are: *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. 1892.

Reprint, *The New Park Street Pulpit.* 6 vols, Spurgeon's *Sermon Notes*, and *The Treasury of the*

Bible.

Among other great works are titles in books by recognized authors used to define

expository or biblical preaching. Some of the primary works are: Karl Barth and *The Doctrine Of*

The Word Of God in his *Church Dogmatics*; next is Harold Bryson's *Expository Preaching*; also

utilized was Bryan Chappell's *Christ-Centered Preaching*; and as has already been mentioned

Between Two Worlds and *The Art & Craft Of Biblical Preaching*. These books offer a

comprehensive explanation of what preaching consists of.

The History of Preaching by O.C Edwards was used as a reference for Spurgeon and his

contributions to preaching as well as David Larsen's *A Company Of Preachers*. These books

offer a snapshot at the methodology of Spurgeon in preaching, but did not give as much detail as

some of the others mentioned.

In order to understand today's culture; Millard Erickson in his *Christian Theology* is

consulted. Erickson offers the most comprehensive look into postmodernism and some of the

characteristics. He also offers a look into modernism which is the culture that Spurgeon was

faced with. This book provided appreciated intuition.

Internet

There were several exceptional articles taken from the internet in reference to the

preaching of Spurgeon. One of the most notable was Craig F. Skinner's *The Preaching of*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Skinner breaks down the mechanics and focus of Spurgeon's

preaching along with practical insight. Lewis A. Drummond also provided information in this

area with *The Secrets of Spurgeon's Preaching*. Both of these articles are tremendous and

deserve referencing.

One article that was utilized for its awareness into church trends was George Barna's *Six Mega-themes That Emerge in 2010*. These six trends are the basis for questioning the effectiveness of preaching methodology. This project results in a methodology that retorts the negative consequences of culture on preaching and the local church. Barna is recognized as an up-to-date researcher.

The remaining articles were valued for their contributions but deal more with Spurgeon's passion and his innovation in preaching. Lynn E. May's *Charles Spurgeon*; Albert Mohler Jr.'s *A Passion for Preaching*; Theodore F. Nelson's *Theory and Practice of Preaching*; John Pitts' *Genius of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*; and David Stokes' *Young Mr. Spurgeon*. While these offered some value in the area of mechanics, they were primarily used as support references. Most of the articles and books utilized were a combination of new sources and sources utilized throughout the preaching society as recognized works. This provides an overall summary of the works used in this project.

Scripture

There were several passages used in relation to this project. One which serves as a foundation for ministry is Matthew 28:18-20. Here Christ prepares His disciples for His ascension by giving them final instructions. His instructions are to "make disciples." As a basis for preaching, this command holds true today also. In these final words Christ says "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Disciples are made by giving instruction and teaching.

Spurgeon was driven by compassion for the lost. Matthew 9:36 captures this thought as Christ had compassion on the confused crowd. Compassion is a requirement for preaching a

ministry. This biblical standard is should be up-held through preaching.

Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34-43 is a fine example of a message. When one examines this message they find all the essential parts a Christ-centered sermon. Peter presented the full gospel message, and exposed the truth about Christ. This passage also establishes that Christ was appointed by God to judge the world of its offence to God with sin.

In Acts 17:22-31, Paul stood boldly before Areopagus and preached about Christ. Paul was not hindered by thoughts of persecution or even execution. Spurgeon was bold in his preaching. He shares comparable qualities with both Peter and Paul. There is an orthodox view of preaching here that demands boldness. Preachers with impact will adhere to these qualities.

A verse that follows this pattern was written by Paul when he said," For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."[4] Paul claims that he is not embarrassed by preaching Christ and the message was the avenue by which people are saved. This project was written with these thoughts in min; that people would be saved and that preachers would not be abashed in sharing the gospel.

Paul further exclaims that he was not the power behind his preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. He says that the power in his preaching is a result of the Spirit. The Spirit demonstrates its power and strength in and through the preaching of God's word. This project will reveal the power that was in Spurgeon's preaching and inspire men to preach with confidence and fruit.

Paul continues with this thought in 1 Corinthians by saying, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the

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[4] Romans 1:16

foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"[5] In the same passage he also

comments," but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles

foolishness." [6] Paul says that the message of Christ is offensive to the world, but He essential to

salvation. It would be grave to preach a message without Christ as the center according to Paul

and Spurgeon. Once gain Paul makes a remarkable statement to this effect in 2 Corinthians 4:5,"

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for

Jesus' sake." Here Paul introduces the idea of Christ as Lord and His children as "bond-

servants." Certainly this is not a prevalent thought with many in the postmodern culture and the

challenge is to communicate and expose this truth with efficacy.

The Bible clearly calls for the consistency in preaching the gospel. 1 Timothy 4:13 says,"

Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." In

the second letter Paul stays on this topic and says," Be diligent to present yourself approved to

God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." [7]

As to when the preacher is to be ready to preach Paul said," preach the word; be ready in season

and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."[8] According to

these passages, Paul was saying to Timothy to preach Christ at all times; when it is convenient

and when it is not.

Finally James 1: 22 says to "be doers of the word" suggesting that the word requires

action and decision. Preaching necessitates evaluation. A close evaluation of the ancient text and

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[5] 1 Corinthians 1:21

[6] 1 Corinthians 1:23

[7] 2 Timothy 2:15

[8] 2 Timothy 4:2

contemporary society will reveal a timeless methodology for all ages. This project does that

considering the two along with the fruitful ministry of Spurgeon as a guide.

CHAPTER 1

The Emergent Church Movement

Postmodern is a term that has been introduced to the church over the past several years. This term has taken on many connotations, but it essentially means everything that comes after modern thought. The postmodern culture has brought about a movement in the church referred to as the Emergent Church Movement. From the The Emergent Church Movement has been introduced what is considered the foremost support for this movement which is found in the Emergent Village. This group of friends who have been "disenfranchised" with the traditional "ecclesiastical institutions" began the movement in the late 1990's with the flagship of the Leadership Network.[9] This movement began as a group of friends who met and began to discuss their ideals and vision for the future of the church. This friendship became the basis for the movement. The conversations and the dialogue that took place were centered on how to reach the postmodern culture.

In 2001 the movement adopted the label of "Emergent." This friendship has been referred to as a "conversation" and as a means of gaining a following it is suggested that others" join the conversation." The Emergent Village is considered the funding and support for the movement. The Emergent Village is governed by four main principles. The first is "a commitment to God in the way of Jesus; the second is a commitment to the church in all its forms; the third is a commitment to God's world; and the fourth is a commitment to one another." The movement follows these practices with what is referred to as "Action." The Action that is called for is:

> We live out the four values of our rule through four lines of action: We explore and develop ideas, theology, practices, and connections … through conversations, conferences, think-tanks, gatherings, retreats, publications, learning cohorts, online resources, and other means. We resource individuals, leaders, and organizations –

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[9] The Emergent Village website http://emergentvillage.org/ (accessed April 13-23).

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funding their imagination, stimulating their thinking, providing examples, events, literature and other resources to assist them in their lives and mission. We communicate our calling, vision, learning, and activities to the growing Emergent Village community, and to other interested people around the world. We provide ways for people to belong, identify with, and participate in this community, conversation, and mission at varying levels. We encourage the development of generative friendships, collaborations, and partnerships. Again there is a concluding emphasis placed on friendships and partnerships. Also conversations take place to "explore and develop ideas, theology, practices, and connections.[10]

The nature of this this movement raises concern in the local church and has implications for the event of preaching. The movement was born out of concerns for the institution of the established church and its practices. One of the foremost practices in the church is preaching, so it can be assumed that this is in question as well. This critical issue has become more of a concern because of the movements approach to scripture and theology and its post-modern influence. John MacArthur in an article on the subject has commented about the concern for the church and the implications regarding scripture:

A new movement is now arising in evangelical circles. Apparently, the main object of attack will be the perspicuity of Scripture. Influenced by postmodern notions about language, meaning, subjectivity, and truth, many younger evangelicals are questioning whether the Word of God is clear enough to justify certainty or dogmatism on points of doctrine. Ironically, this new movement to a certain extent ignores all the previous debates. Instead, its proponents are more interested in dialogue and conversation. As a result, they scorn and rebuff propositional truth (which tends to end dialogue rather than cultivate it) as an outmoded vestige of twentieth-century modernism.

With this movement comes the concern based on MacArthur's understanding of the movement that truth may always be changing or open for dialogue. The Emergent Village admittedly encouraged open conversations and dialogue on points of theology and ecclesiastical practices. This kind of thinking could perhaps lead to a belief that no truth is constant. The movement want's conversation and dialogue about theses keys areas of doctrine to be prolonged.

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[10] The Emergent Village website.

Among those who have been associated with the Emerging Church Movement which from this point on will be referred to as (ECM) are Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, and in the early days of the movement Mark Driscoll. Driscoll describes the movement in an article as:

> The emerging church is a growing, loosely connected movement of primarily young pastors who are glad to see the end of modernity and are seeking to function as missionaries who bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to emerging and postmodern cultures. The emerging church welcomes the tension of holding in one closed hand the unchanging truth of evangelical Christian theology (Jude 3) and holding in one open hand the many cultural ways of showing and speaking Christian truth as a missionary to America (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Since the movement, if it can be called that, is young and is still defining its theological center, I do not want to portray the movement as ideologically unified because I myself swim in the theologically conservative stream of the emerging church.

Driscoll who considers himself theologically conservative eventually separated himself from the movement due to differences in matters of doctrine. In a recent article since separating from the movement Driscoll further explains the basis of these conversations by citing missiologist Ed Stetzer and using his terminology to clarify the movement's philosophy. In this statement those associated with ECM are referred to as Revisionists by Ed Stetzer:

> *Revisionists* are theologically liberal and question key evangelical doctrines, critiquing their appropriateness for the emerging postmodern world. Reconstructionist look to such leaders as Brian McLaren and Doug Pagitt as well as other Emerging Christians. The common critique of Revisionists is that they are recycling the doctrinal debates of a previous generation and also not seeing significant conversion growth.[11]

A concern with this movement and one of its most prominent and influential thinkers McLaren, is that one cannot obtain any degree of certainty regarding truth and doctrine. With no degree of certainty, all matters of scripture are open for discussion since there are no concluding truths in scripture. MacArthur centers his attention of the perspicuity of scripture. In other words

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[11] Driscoll, Mark. 2006. "A pastoral perspective on the Emergent Church." Criswell Theological Review 3, no. 2: 87-93. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 13, 2012).

MacArthur questions whether McLaren believes in the clarity of scripture and goes on to suggest that he does not believe in the authority of scripture.

If McLaren is right with his theory, this will have serious implications for the local church and preaching. Preaching which is an event that is based on clarity and authority of the Bible would be different. The Emergent Village which will be referred to as (EV) from this point on encourages the use of dialogue and discussion for is primary source of information. The problem with this is that the information is always being modified. The EV promotes growth from engaging people in these continuing dialogues though conferences. According the EV website, the movement does not endorse a statement of beliefs that does not allow for variations.

The Need for a Preaching and Cultural Assessment

The ECM and the EV have raised questions about the Bible and culture. Contemporary preachers are faced with the daunting challenge of taking an ancient message and relaying to modern context. The content should remain the same, but the method of relaying the message should be evaluated. In his 1982 book *Between Two Worlds*, John Stott refers to this challenge as "bridge-building."[12] This metaphor is used to discuss the process of converging two cultures despite their vast differences. Stott says that this need for a bridge is caused by a chasm between two worlds: "The chasm is the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world."[13] He continues to say, "It is across this broad and deep divide of two thousand years of changing culture (more still in the case of the Old Testament) that Christian communicators have to throw bridges."[14] He further explains the responsibility of the communicator: "Our task is to enable

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[12] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 137.

[13] Ibid., 138.

God's revealed truth to flow out of the scriptures into the lives of the men and women today."[15]

In order to do so, cultures must be merged in order to communicate a message of timeless

significance.

Ed Stetzer writes about the difference in the church engaging culture and exercising error

of doctrine by saying, "The edge of culture is different than the edge of error. The Christian

needs to get as far from the edge of error as possible."[16] This warning to avoid the error of truth

is critical when considering the exposition of scripture; however, one must also consider the

cultural implications of preaching without crossing a line. The question that Stetzer raises is how

far can one go without going too far? To relate back to Stott's terminology, when building the

bridge, one must consider elements of culture when forming a methodology of exposition, in that

others are exposed to the truth of scripture. It is therefore the task of the preacher be aware of

cultural implications and subsequently determine how close to culture one can get without it

becoming error. Once again Stetzer affirms Stott when he writes, "Our call is to take the never-

changing message into and ever-changing world."[17] In other words, "building bridges" is the job

of the preacher.

Since the foundation of the church there have been many changes in culture and the

church. According to youth ministry specialist Walt Mueller, in a 2007 article by Nathan Black,

music was the major media form that influenced teenagers. Today, however, marketing has

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[14] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 138.

[15] Ibid., 139.

[16] Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer, *Perimeters of Light: Biblical Boundaries for the Emerging Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishing, 2004), 31.

[17] Towns and Stetzer, 32.

become the dominant media influence in the teen's life.[18] The amount of marketing messages the average adult sees according to the article is between 3,500 and 16,000 marketing messages per day.[19] Society is daily saturated with marketing messages, while the average preacher at most gets less than a three hour window of opportunity for a message that is at least 2,000 years old.

Another challenge regarding culture is what is referred to as *social media*. Dwight Zscheile, in his article "Social Networking and Church Systems" reveals the current cultural trend shifting from a News Anchor based source of information to the multiple media outlets that have become available. He says, "At the heart of this shifts are networks. Networks are rapidly becoming the basic organizational paradigm of twenty-first century western culture. If the internet is the central cultural metaphor, the network is the underlying architecture for how we relate and structure our lives."[20] Therefore, based on this article, the internet and its networks have become the main means of communication as well as the primary source for information.

Zscheile further states the relationship this has to the existing church with this key insight: "Most existing church systems were shaped by bureaucratic organizational paradigms of a previous century that are coming under increasing stress today. The shift to a network society brings both profound challenges and great opportunities to the church in our culture."[21] This stress results from the fact that many churches are utilizing outdated and irrelevant theories while new theories are having influence in people's lives.

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[18] Nathan Black, "How to Respond to Rapidly Changing Youth Culture," *The Christian Post* May 10, 2007.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Dwight J. Zscheile, "Social Networking and Church Systems," *Word and World* 30, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 247-255. *http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/ehost/ pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=e5102370-17c6-4111-9900-0b8f7d9d8d80%40sessionmgr 10&vid=23&hid=119* (accessed February 17, 2012).

[21] Ibid.

Zscheile also cites Albert-Laszlo Barbasi from *Linked* with an explanation of *Social Networking Basics*. Research has shown that networks have been broadly studied in multiple fields. Basically, networks comprise three main elements: nodes (individual points or participants), links (communication relationships between nodes), and hubs (nodes that are linked to multiple other modes).[22] This research shows that hubs play a significant role in networking. "In most networks, 80 percent of networking activity goes through the 20 percent of the nodes that are hubs. These hubs are so vital that one can actually remove 80 percent of the nodes in a network and the network will still function- provided the hubs remain intact."[23] Here it is suggested that "people are the nodes and the hubs and relationships are the links."[24] In this case, hubs represent key people who have a major influence on others.

The proliferation of social media has successfully linked people from all over the world. Exemplifying this trend, the social media network Facebook is one of the most popular means for people from all over the world to communicate with each other. Furthermore, news and other information are shared as quickly and efficiently as any traditional news service. With an estimated 845 million users worldwide by the end of 2011, Facebook has only increased in popularity since its inception, and this serves as but a single example of the ways in which people are linked together through electronic means.[25]

From this, one can clearly see the challenges placed on the preacher, whose primary

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[22] Albert-Laszlo Barbasi, *Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means* (New York: Plume, 2003), 96-120.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Facebook, "Fact Sheet" http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22 (accessed March 3, 2012).

responsibility is to communicate information of the ancient biblical text to people entrenched in a contemporary society. While Zscheiele's response is to create a network of churches that would essentially function much like Wikipedia, which is ultimately controlled by the users, he does not address the role of preaching in a society already overloaded with forms and means of communication and information.

This media overload not only affects the role of the preacher, but it also directly affects how people view preaching and worship. Robert Kysar suggests that this media advancement has changed the way people learn or retain information:

> Perhaps more basic in this process of fragmentation is the fact that our ways of receiving information-indeed, our senses themselves-are being transformed as a result of contemporary media. We learn in little scraps, such as the television commercial. The television bombards us daily with thousands of disparate images and messages. The computer internet provides bits and pieces, and the browser at best networks information from numerous sources.[26]

Due to the information being distributed in bits and pieces, Kysar suggests that this influences learning and people will retain things in fragmented sections. This would, in turn, limit the use of large or lengthy portions of text.[27] In essence is shortens the attention span for learning to segmented portions.

In one article regarding students and the influence of technology on learning, shorter more segmented portions of learning are encouraged, because the division of topics and multi-tasking hindered long-term memory and retention. This, along with the use of electronic media comprising more than seven to eight hours of a student's day, has created challenges for

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[26] Robert Kysar, "New Doctrinal Preaching for a New Century," *Journal For Preachers* 20, no. 3 (January 1, 1997): 17-22. http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=b572b0f6-e38d-43bb-a72a-aedde10a9cd 0%40 sessionmgr15&vid=6&hid=127 (accessed February 17, 2012).

[27] Ibid.

learning. Each teacher must consider the attention span and the challenges of learning due to these conditions. The article suggests dividing learning segments into 10-12 minute increments and focusing on one topic at a time. Also due to the use of media, the instruction period should be supported by video clips, debates, and role-play.[28] This is a stark contrast to the ecclesiastical learning environment of the 19th century, where it was not uncommon for worship services to last between 45 minutes and 2 hours, with no other source of instruction than that of the lecturer. In most cases, there was no amplification or any way to manipulate voice projection.

This creates a chasm for the preacher, which grows wider and deeper with advancement in technology. Technology sets a pace for culture, and when culture changes at a rapid pace, the church must evaluate the methods it uses to communicate a never-changing message. More literature needs to be provided with these thoughts in mind and preaching theory must be adapted to the culture in which the event takes place.

In an article in *Christian Century,* Bob Allen reports on the effects that this cultural shift has had on the Southern Baptist Convention. He writes, "Southern Baptists reported 5 percent fewer baptisms in 2010 than in 2009 – 332,321 compared to 349,737. Total membership was counted at 16,136,044, a drop of 0.15 percent and the fourth straight year of membership losses."[29] The Southern Baptists have enjoyed many years of being one of the leading evangelical denominations since the time of Charles Spurgeon in the nineteenth century that has experienced growth and membership increases. This recent study should be reason for evaluation

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[28] Jerome L. Rekart, "Taking on Multitasking," *Phi Delta Kappan* 93, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 60-63. *http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=6ea7814a-e8eb-41be-bbd7-74dcd9b39f43%40sessionmgr 114&vid=4&hid=108* (accessed February 19, 2012).

[29] Bob Allen, "SBC Notes a Drop in Baptisms, Attendance," *Christian Century* 128, no. 14 (July 12, 2011): 16-22. http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=119&sid= e5102370-17c6-4111-9900-0b8f7d9d8d80%40sessionmgr10 (accessed February 17, 2012).

of the preaching within the denomination and theory and practice in which it is carried out. Allen does comment that the number of church plants has increased with measureable success in membership and baptisms. While some could suggests that church planting is the new method for church revitalization, this would not change the need to communicate the gospel through the preaching event.

Allen further cites that there were fewer people who attended the national Convention than the year 1944.[30] There are many factors that could play into this drop in attendance: 1. The demands of local church ministry, 2. The economy and the cost of travel, or 3. The generational shift among pastors and churches, which are choosing to be more decentralized than previous years. Though these are all speculations as to why attendance has dropped at the Convention, the telling statistic is the decline in membership and baptisms among local established churches.

The local church is in a challenge with the EV and postmodern culture. The idea that truth is ever changing or that the certainty of scripture is not obtainable comes with a consequence. One consequence is that the education ministries of the church like preaching and congregational worship will have to address the questions raised from the ECM. These questions directly raise doubts in the mind of the postmodern thinker.

These effects of the postmodern era and the ECM on the ministries of the church as it relates to preaching and teaching warrant some investigation on the part of the church. One such study has been performed by the Barna Group which reveals "Six Mega Themes" which permeate the church of the postmodern era. Some of the same ideas from the EV can found in Barna's research.

The first of the findings is that *the Christian church is becoming less theologically*

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[30] Bob Allen, *Christian Century*, 128.

literate.[31] In other words, the church as a whole has become ignorant of traditional doctrinal teachings and lacks interest in pursuing an understanding of them on their own. While holidays such as Easter and Christmas have special meaning to most Christians, they are not associated with the essential doctrines related to salvific purposes. In addition, most adults do not see their faith as a part of their everyday life. Furthermore, they fail to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a living entity, only a representation of God. He also warns that the church may become a "theological free-for-all."[32] Barna's studies suggest that the result will be time of confused theology in the years to come.

Second, Barna's findings indicates that *the church is becoming more ingrown and there is less outward focus.*[33] People are less likely to invite friends to worship or church events than they have in the past. Barna states,

> Examples of this tendency include facts that less than one third of born again Christians planned to invite anyone to join them at a church event during the Easter season; teenagers are less likely inclined to discuss Christianity with their friends than was true in the past; most of the people who become Christians these days do so in response to a personal crisis or fear of death (particularly among older Americans); and most Americans are unimpressed with e contributions Christians and churches have made to society over the past few years.[34]

Services such as Easter are no longer opportunities for outreach like they have been in the past. The church's evangelistic efforts have diminished and the church has stagnated or declined in growth. People are less comfortable talking about spiritual matters with their friends and family members and the number of atheists is growing.

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[31] Barna Group, "Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010," www.barna.org/culture-articles/462-six-megathemes-emerge-from2010.

[32] Barna, *Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010.*

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

Third, according to Barna, *people are less concerned about spiritual principles and are more concentrated on practical solutions for life.*[35] For many, life is spent in survival mode. Teenagers put their education and career above faith, although faith is still important. Adults focus on a comfortable lifestyle and security above matters of faith. The spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, and solitude are virtually non-existent in today's culture. Barna states, "Because we continue to separate our spirituality from other dimensions of life through compartmentalization, a relatively superficial approach to faith has become a central means of optimizing our life experience."[36] Though faith matters to them, it is overshadowed by the everyday practical concerns of life. Furthermore, spiritual matters are not seen as a possible solution to life's problems.

A fourth finding is that *Christians are more interested in contributing to the social needs and concerns of the community.*[37] Young adults mainly are interested in community and social engagement as a means of expressing genuine faith. The study comments on this by saying, "However, despite the increased emphasis, churches run the risk of watching congregants' engagement wane unless they embrace a strong spiritual basis for such service."[38] The problem with this is that if the church fails to equip its people to engage with the right focus, the efforts will become futile and the church will ultimately lose influence. While many church members remain selfish, many are becoming more involved in the social ills of society. Barna continues, "The more that churches and believers can be recognized as people doing good deeds out of genuine love and compassion, the more appealing the Christian life will be to those who are on

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[35] Barna, *Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010*.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

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the sidelines watching."[39]

A fifth theme that has emerged is that *the postmodern influence of tolerance is invading the church.*[40] The church has promoted tolerance, thus conceding to the moral and spiritual challenges of the day for the fear of being condemning. The church concedes the principles it was founded on for fear they will lose their members, and the church, as a result, has little if any answerability to its members and many people believe the church should not indoctrinate its people. These statements are summed up by Barna, who indicates that "the challenge today is for Christian leaders to achieve the delicate balance between representing truth and acting in love."[41] If allowed to continue, tolerance and biblical illiteracy will certainly prevent a church from being spiritually healthy.

The final theme is *that Christian influence on society and culture is obsolete.*[42] In the history of the world, Christianity has had more influence on society and culture than any other organization. Unfortunately according to Barna's most recent estimates, this is no longer the case. In fact, the church has less influence in this world at this point in history than ever before. Christianity is no longer the default for faith practices. More people are now influenced by the media and its corresponding images. Barna states that in this current time, "the images people see become their reality."[43] Barna's last comment on this summarizes the article by stating, "With the likelihood of an accelerating pace of life, and increasingly incomplete cues being

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[39] Barna, *Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010.*

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

given to the population, Christian leaders would do well to revisit their criteria for 'success' and the measures used to asses it."[44] Success has largely been associated with membership numbers in the past. He continues, "In a society in which choice is king, there are no absolutes, every individual is a free agent, we are taught to be self-reliant and independent, and Christianity is no longer the automatic, default faith of young adults, new ways of relating to Americans and exposing the heart and soul of the Christian faith are required."[45] Considering these trends, churches must ask the question whether or not they are bridging the gap between church and culture.

Pastor Craig A. Loscalzo provides insight into confronting the postmodern influences in society by focusing on apologetics in preaching. He identifies some of the characteristics of the movement, already highlighted by Barna's research, and begins by commenting on the definition of postmodernism:

> Is post-modernism a movement, a philosophy, a reaction to modernism or merely a modern shibboleth academicians use to impress other academicians? The answer: all of the above. A dictionary definition might describe postmodernism as a reactive movement against the theories and practices of modern art, literature, philosophy, economics, politics, and theology. Calling postmodernism merely a "reactive movement," however, begs some larger issues at stake. In a basic and sweeping sense, postmodernism is what follows modern.[46]

The first area that Loscalzo asserts about postmodernism is that *technology is no longer seen as a solution to all the problems in the world*.[47] Technology was supposed to make life better and create more margins in life. The advance in the social networking is admittedly

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[44] Barna, *Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010.*

[45] Ibid.

[46] Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 13

[47] Loscalzo, 13.

leaving today's society socially awkward, but no one is willing to abandon it to return to the days of personal contact. Healthcare has gotten better and helped people live longer, but people are still starving in the world and dying from diseases like AIDS. The postmodern is quick to point out where technology has fallen short but they still want to possess the latest technological gadget.

The second area of mention is that *the post-modern refuses to accept any form of absolute truth*.[48] Absolute truth is an oxymoron to the postmodern, for truth is considered to be entirely relative. Truth depends on the individual experience and is not the same for every person. According to this mindset, there are multiple sources of truth, and each person can determine his or her own personal outcome.

The third identifying mark is that *a person can have anything their own way*.[49] This casual, "fast food" philosophy to life is applied to everything from buying a car to religion. Most people in the past attended a church associated with their families and growth became generational; however, now people are breaking the traditions and looking for churches that have choices that meet their personal desires. Traditional denominations are less stable and defined than they have ever been. Furthermore, postmodernist care less about beliefs and more about programs.

The church is in a period of reformation once more. Unlike its predecessor, this reformation is not as much about *sola scriptura* or *sola fide*. Rather, this reformation is about the preaching influences and the ability to communicate the message of the gospel to a postmodern culture. Post-modern is a term that has taken on many nuances. According to Millard Erickson,

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[48] Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World*, 13.

[49] Ibid, 14.

postmodern simply means "that which comes after modernism." "Modernism is that period that came after the Reformation and the Renaissance."[50]

Jimmy Long agrees indicates that defining postmodernism is an endless task and provides insight into the trends that can be found from the Enlightenment to the postmodern era. The first trend is that there is a *focus from autonomous self to tribal focus*. The language that one hears in the 21st century is community instead of tribalism. People now have tendency to long for community. The church has used this terminology in order to define the association of believers within the church. The next shift that he describes is the shift from *basing decisions on truth to basing decisions on preferences*. The church has become a buffet of preferences for many in the postmodern culture. The Enlightenment period focused on truth but it was not God's truth, so this is not all that bad considering the negative influences that flowed from that period. The third shift that he describes is the shift from *belief in human progress to hopelessness*. What once was encouragement in the progress of humanity has turned into despair for the future. There are more questions and critics being cultivated than answers and hope. Long continues to say that these are doors of opportunity for the gospel.[51] The preacher is charged with not only taking advantage of these opportunities and proclaiming a message that addresses these and other issues, but equipping the people of the church to also communicate the message of the gospel in the changing times.

Truth Decay, a book by Douglas Groothuis, presents the challenge of how the postmodern views truth. The worldview of the postmodern has become flawed as a result of

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[50] Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 398.

[51] D. A. Carson, *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 325-327.

social influences like social networking and the media. These resources for the younger generations have caused them to question many of the truths that for many years have gone unquestioned. Postmodern thoughts have centered on pluralism, relativism, and naturalism. Groothuis describes the trend this way:

> For these postmodernist thinkers, the very idea of truth has decayed and disintegrated. It is no longer something knowable by anyone who engages in proper forms of investigation and study. Truth is not over and above us, something that can be conveyed across cultures and over time. It is inseparable from our cultural conditioning, our psychology, our race and our gender. At the end of the day, truth is simply what we, as individuals and communities, make it to be-and nothing more. Truth dissolves into a host of disconnected "truths," all equal to each other but unrelated to one another; there is no overall, rational scheme of things.[52]

From this statement, it is clear that the typical postmodernist sees no standard for truth in society, especially from any written literature, such as scripture. Thus the postmodernist is skeptical of anyone lecturing from or commenting on a piece of literature, such as the Bible, that claims to have a standard of truth that transcends time and culture.

Though considered by many to be a classic, *Between Two Worlds* by John Stott provides a relevant commentary on the continuing cultural paradigm shift between modernism and postmodernism. The book addresses the world that exists between that of contemporary culture and the world of the Bible. He addresses the effect that this has on preaching. In chapter two Stott discusses the rising concern for preaching while culture continues to change.

Stott discusses the objections to preaching and gives three reasons he believes people are rejecting biblical preaching. The first of these he cites is a *rejection of authority*.[53] Though there may be several reasons for this shift, he provides the abuse of authority figures throughout the

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[52] Douglas Grothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 20.

[53] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 51.

world's history as one explanation. There have been abuses of power by key political, religious, and authority figures that have raised people's suspicions, and these suspicions have been confirmed through isolated cases of abuses of power that have led to generalizations about the whole.

These abuses have also lead to a movement of freedom of speech that has resulted in a total impotence of all authority. This side effect has greatly hindered the work of the preacher, and has caused many to question the imperatives found in scripture about the way that one should live. Furthermore, Christ's authority as head of the Church has been challenged and reduced down to one of many religious options, resulting in a form of contemporary polytheism.

The second reason for the objections to preaching is what is referred to as the *social media era*.[54] This is like no other in the use of computers, T.V. and other media outlets as a form of communication. Stott refers to this as the *Cybernetics Revolution*, a time in which all generations have become involved in the use of social networking through computers and cell phones. In many ways, the socializing that once took place in the church is now taking place through cyberspace. People watch as much television as they do any other hobbies. Education is being done through the internet and the learning styles have changed. News and information is now gathered through the television or computer.

These areas of change in information gathering have created competition for the preacher as a source of information. The preacher's information becomes only one option out of many sources of information. These networks present many challenges to the church and has changed the approach to Apologetics and Evangelism.

The last, and most alarming, item that Stott asserts is the *loss of confidence in the*

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[54] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 50-89.

gospel.[55] Stott believes that this is one of the major challenges to preaching and it is an indictment on the church that the very essence of the message that is preached has become a silent solution to the evil that is prevalent in the world.

The silence of the gospel is the antithesis of what the gospel truly is. Many churches have traded the unaided preaching of the gospel for programs and models. These programs and models alone are useless with the proclamation of the news that is to be spread. Tolerance has crept in among the pulpits and has replaced the bold and unashamed proclamation of a message that has been communicated through the ages. This obstacle stands in direct contrast to the words of Paul written two millennia ago: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."[56] This can only mean that the absence of the gospel means the absence of converts. Where the gospel is no longer proclaimed there will cease to be believers, which in turn creates a crisis for the church. The postmodern generation must place its confidence in the gospel and renew the commitment to the proclamation of it in order to grow the Kingdom of God.

Preaching Defined

Transliteration of Greek

The New Testament has three words that are associated with the English word preach. The transliteration most often used is *kerysso*. This word means to be a herald or to proclaim openly.[57] This word is used in passages such as Matthew 10:7, "and as you go, preach, saying the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." There is an understood implication with this word of authority

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[55] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 50-89.

[56] Rom. 1:16.

[57] Blue Letter Bible website:
http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=preaching&t=KJV (accessed, April 13, 2012).

requiring a response. This same word can be found in Romans 10:14 where Paul says," How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" This word occurs 63 times in the King James Version Concordance.

The next word that can be found is *eauggelizo*. This transliteration of the Greek is found 52 times in the KJV Concordance. It carries the idea of bringing good news or glad tidings.[58] Luke 3:18 uses this word to describe what John the Baptists ministry consisted of," So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people." Another use of the word can be found in Acts 8:4 where persecution resulted in the scattering of the Church but with fruitful results," Therefore those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." Most of the uses of this word imply Christ or salvation as the subject of this good news. The word *euangelizo* differs from *kerysso* because of its accent of the act of proclamation while *kerysso* highlights the content or message.

The content or the *kerysso* does not change because the message of the Bible does not change. The idea of exposition or exposing what the Bible says may take on different methodologies, but the act of preaching and the message are constant. The *euangelizo* or to preach good news or glad tidings is specifically to preach the message of salvation through Jesus Christ as can be found in Luke 1:19, 20; 9:6; Acts 5:42; 8:4; 25;35; 10:36; 11:20;13:32; 17:18; and Galatians 1:16.

The third word under consideration for this project is the transliteration of the Greek *katagello*. This word is found 17 times in the KJV Concordance. The word most often carries the

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[58] Blue Letter Bible website:
http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=preaching&t=KJV (accessed, April 13, 2012).

meaning to announce, declare, promulgate, and to make known.[59] In Acts 13:5 Luke uses this word and the NASB translates it as proclaim," When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews." In Acts 16:21 the KJV translates the word as teach but again the NASB translates it as proclaim," and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." These words provide a basis for which preaching can be understood.[60]

This aversion to the absolute nature of the gospel has serious consequences to the art and practice of preaching, which seeks to communicate truth that is both ancient and absolute. Much research exists that highlights the characteristics and the traits in this period of history; however, few resources exist which provide practical suggestions to the preaching pastor of an established local church. Furthermore, the amount of literature one can use to draw principles from regarding preaching that transcends time and culture is also very minimal. It is for this reason that the expository preaching style of Charles Spurgeon will be examined in detail.

Bryan Chappell comments on expository preaching by saying, "An expository sermon may be defined as a message whose structure and thought are derived from a biblical text, that covers the scope of the text, and that explains the features and context of the text in order to disclose the enduring principles for faithful thinking, living, and worship intended by the spirit, who inspired the text."[61] This definition says that the message is strictly derived from the text and the focus is on uncovering the truths that can be found within. He continues to write that

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[59] Blue Letter Bible website: http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=preaching&t=KJV (accessed, April 13, 2012).

[60] Blue Letter Bible website: http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=preaching&t=KJV (accessed, April 13, 2012).

[61] Bryan Chappell, *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 31.

there is no place for opinions and additional philosophies.[62] The strength of this definition is found in uncovering the truths found in the text.

In *Power in the Pulpit*, Vines and Shaddix define preaching as "the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response."[63] Here there is no mention of exposition, but one can assume it is implied by the phrase "biblical truth." This truth is revealed from the Holy Spirit and is to be communicated to others. The preacher is to provide a sound study of the passage to determine the original meaning with implications for today, find a way to expose it to the audience while maintaining the integrity of its original meaning. Next they provide a checklist that makes the sermon expository:

- It must be based on a passage from the Bible. The actual meaning of the passage must be found.
- The meaning must be related to the immediate and general context of the passage.
- The eternal, timeless truths in the passage must be clarified.
- The truths must be gathered around a compelling theme.
- The main divisions of the sermon must be drawn from the structure of the passage itself.
- Every possible method to apply the truths must be utilized.
- The hearers must be called to obey those truths and to live them out in daily life.[64]

This definition takes the meaning intentionally toward expositional preaching. This definition also asserts that the truths found within are timeless and apply to any period of time or culture. They do go on to say that the most use of the passage is drawn from a book study; "The best preaching you can do is to go through books of the Bible—chapter by chapter and paragraph by paragraph—in a systematic fashion. Such an approach will ensure the keenest interpretation and

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[62] Chappell, *Christ Centered Preaching,* 31.

[63] Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 27.

[64] Ibid., 31.

the best use of context."[65] Here it is clear that biblical preaching and expositional preaching are one entity with different focuses. That does not indicate that a passage that is not taken from a consecutive set of messages related to the same paragraph and text are not biblical; rather, they would not be considered solely expositional based on the definition.

In the book *Preaching The Cross*, Albert Mohler Jr. comments on *Preaching With Culture in View*. That is essentially what preachers need to be concerned with today, both in the United States as well as the United Kingdom. Mohler defines preaching in the following manner:

> I define expository preaching as the mode of Christian preaching which takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the sustenance and the structure of the sermon. Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and message of the biblical text and makes clear how the Word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God.[66]

Here Mohler institutes the clear importance of the text remaining central to preaching. Culture changes, but the text does not. He also comments that the text not only provides the substance of what is being preached, but it also provides its own structure unique to each passage.

Stephen Olford is considered by many to be one of the great expositors of the 20th Century. Olford takes a threefold approach to defining expository preaching. First he cites the Westminster Directory (1645) which states that the "true idea of [expository] preaching is that the preacher should become a mouthpiece for his text, opening it up and applying it as a word from God to his hearers…. In order that the text may speak…. and be heard, making each point from his text in such a manner that [his audience] may discern [the voice of God]." He continues

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[65] Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 32.

[66] Mark Dever, J. Ligon Duncan III, Albert Mohler Jr., and C.J. Mahaney. *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2007), 66.

to provide his own definition: "Expository preaching is the Spirit empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God's Word with due regard to the historical, contextual, grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given passage, with the specific object of invoking a Christ-transforming response."[67] Here Olford highlights the importance of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the process of studying the text methodically. Olford than references Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." Paul addresses the responsibility of the expositor by stating that one must be cautious in presenting the Word of God appropriately to others.

Harold Bryson also provides some insight into expository preaching. First, Bryson compares the amount of biblical emphasis on three sermon forms: Topical, Textual, and Expository sermons. Of these three forms, Bryson cites that Expository Preaching is the purest form of biblical preaching among the three. He then compiles an array of definitions to arrive at a concise statement: "Expository Preaching is the art of preaching a series of sermons, either consecutive or selective, from a Bible book."[68] This definition emphasizes consecutive sermons that are drawn from a particular book. These messages do not have to be paragraph by paragraph but should at least be in the context of the book as a whole.

One of the most profound definitions about preaching is that of John Stott as given in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*: "To expound scripture is to open up the inspired text with

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[67] Stephen Olford and David Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 69.

[68] Harold Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching Through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 39.

such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and His people obey Him."[69] Stott further clarifies this definition by saying that there are two convictions about the text. The first is that it is an inspired text, communicated to mankind by men through God's special revelation. The second chapter of Timothy states that "all scripture is breathed out by God."[70] The rabbinical teaching was that the spirit of God rested on in the prophets and spoke through them, so that their words did not come from themselves but from the mouth of God; they spoke and wrote in the Holy Spirit."[71]

The second conviction is that the text is considered a partially closed text. It is not open to private interpretation; rather, according to Ephesians 4:11, God has gifted some as preachers and teachers so that they assist in explaining the scriptures. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra stood and read from the Law as the people listened for up to six hours as it was read and explained to them. Ezra had a team of thirteen people who stood on the platform with him and helped explain the scriptures.

Based on the example set forth by Ezra, some of the scriptures, while being God-breathed and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, do need additional exposition and explanation. So when Stott says that the scriptures are partially closed, he is saying that one of the ways in which God opens one's heart to His word is through the work of pastors and teachers. Stott cites Paul's instruction to Timothy in First Timothy 4:13: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." Here, Paul is telling Timothy to prepare to teach the truths found in scripture. Paul would not have made this appeal if it were not necessary that people

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[69] Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2005), 24.

[70] 2 Tim. 3:16.

[71] Cleon L. Rodgers, *The Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 506.

would need an explanation of the given text.

Stott continues to explain two obligations to expounding the text. The first of these is that one must *remain faithful to the text* itself. The Bible is central to preaching, and this text, as previously stated, is God-breathed and needs no additives from man. The primary responsibility of the expositor is simply to determine what has already been said. Unfortunately there are many preachers who attempt to make scripture say what they want it to say instead of saying what is there. This is certainly not the place for one to interject his or her own impressions but to simply restate what has been said in terms that will affect the hearts and minds of the hearer.

The second obligation that Stott asserts that one must *be aware of contemporary culture*. Much of what Barna has found in his research can be associated with cultural awareness. One must remain sensitive to what is happening in culture, while staying committed to an unchanging biblical standard. One must be aware of what is happening in the world, because the philosophies and thought processes of the postmodern cannot be combatted if they are not known.

Related to this, one must also avoid over-compensating for culture. This compensation may lead to tolerance or forbearance of culture when it contradicts a biblical standard. Walter Elwell defines tolerance as the following: "Indulgence of belief or conduct other than one's own."[72] Tolerance has caused much of the decay that is currently seen in the church. It is imperative that there be a balance of cultural awareness while maintaining biblical authority. When Christ discussed the issue of worship with the Samaritan woman in John 4, He stressed the need for worship to be based on truth and knowledge. In doing so, Jesus crossed many cultural and religious barriers to address these issues. Though He was in culture, He was not tolerant of

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[72] Walter Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), s.v. "tolerance."
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the behaviors as He addressed the woman's real needs.

The ultimate responsibility of the preacher is to communicate what the unchanging Word means to a changing society. Though the scriptures say the same thing that they did when they were written, they may be applied in different ways, and there are different implications that can be drawn from every passage or text. Thus the pastor must seriously consider a series of questions: What should the end goal be for the preacher in the local church? It is common to hear preachers refer to transformation or life change as their goal. Has the church lost its influence? If so, how can it be regained? Is preaching as it has been known for hundreds of years still a useful tool for communicating the gospel? If not, how can the gospel be communicated, or if it still is effective, what should it look like? How can the postmodern culture be engaged for real life-change or transformation? The answers to these questions are critical; because the pastor/teacher no longer has the luxury of thinking that a lecture on Sunday morning will draw massive crowds as they once did.

It is important that an end goal be stated as the focus of each preacher. Ephesians 5:1 states a clear goal for every believer as well as every non-believer. Paul says in this passage, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." The previous verse provides context to this verse up by encouraging its readers to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Here there is a direct correlation between people treating others well and imitating God in their lives. The word *imitate* comes from the transliterated Greek word *mimetes*, meaning to "imitate or follow." It is used in a present continuous tense when accompanied with the verb *ginomai*.[73] Thus Christians are to continually follow the ways

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[73] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 1985), s.v. "imitate."

of God in life and to forgive others as He has forgiven. One's relationship to others is a mirror of their ability to mimic God the Father and Jesus Christ. A. Skevington Wood comments on this passage by saying, "Paul invites his readers to imitate God. What follows elucidates his meaning. A child will show himself to be a true child by wanting to grow up like his father. In the same way, God's precious children will be eager to copy Him, as He enables them. This was the teaching of Jesus himself."[74] As a lofty but biblical goal, each person is to look more like their Father than they are themselves. The way to achieve this is by following Jesus' teachings and imitating His way of life.

Christ told the disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." It is clear from this passage that He wanted His teachings to be handed down through the disciples, as He taught them how to be conformed to the image of God. The image of God in man was distorted when man fell to sin in the Garden of Eden. The Christian life is to be spent recovering that which was lost and to spread that renewal throughout the world.

John Stott provides two additional goals that are worthy of consideration. The first is that *God's voice be heard* throughout the world. Children cannot be expected to follow what they cannot hear. Hearing God's voice provides a direction for His children to follow. James must have understood this when he wrote, "But be doers of the word, and not hearer's only, deceiving yourselves."[75] The deduction of events then would be for God's Word to be proclaimed and explained; then for people to hear and receive the spoken word, and finally choosing to obey His

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[74] A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, Vol. 11 of *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1978), 66.

[75] James 1:22.

word.

This leads to Stott's second goal: *for people to obey God's Word*. The duties of the preacher are in vain if there is no obedience on the part of people. The fruit of preaching is when people hear and respond to the message that has been set forth. There is to be an expectation that postmoderns experience change through obedience, for the only way to reverse the trends that are defining society and the church are to find ways for God's voice to be heard and obeyed.

This is difficult because many are concerned that the challenges that are faced in culture will continue to provide challenges for preaching in the local church. Tolerance has prompted compromise among many and the consistent pressure to grow the church makes the temptation to compromise truth difficult to resist. Many congregations place unrealistic performance standards on the preachers, basing their evaluation on whether the church is growing numerically.

The truth is that a majority of evangelical churches have become stagnant in their growth or may even be on the decline according to researchers like Barna and Lifeway's Thom S. Rhainer. While the church redefines the standards by which the pastors are judged, there must be a focus that centers on the preaching of God's Word.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. has become skeptical of the state of preaching today. In his book *He Is Not Silent*: *Preaching in a Postmodern World*, Mohler shares his skepticism of the current trends that he sees in preaching. He states in the Preface:

> On the one hand there are signs of great promise and encouragement. For example, a large number of younger evangelical's pastors today are unabashedly committed to biblical exposition. They represent a resurgence of genuine biblical exposition from the pulpits of churches situated in every part of the country, from the inner city to the suburbs and beyond. This new generation is proving once again that the effective and faithful exposition of the word of God draws persons to Christ and leads to spiritual growth and to the health of the church. Indeed this generation of young minister's, along with others making their way through college and seminary education, may point toward a renaissance of biblical preaching in coming years. On the other hand, the last few decades have been a period of wanton experimentation in many pulpits. One of the most troubling

developments is the decline and eclipse of expository preaching. Numerous influential voices within evangelicalism are suggesting that the age of the expository sermon is now past. In its place, some contemporary preachers now substitute messages intentionally designed to reach secular or superficial congregations-messages that avoid preaching a biblical text and thus avoid potentially embarrassing confrontation with biblical truth.[76]

Mohler further provides six observations about contemporary preaching. The first observation that he makes is that contemporary preaching has *lost confidence in the power of the Word of God*. The main fear with this statement is that some preachers are losing their sense of authority in the Word of God. Mohler states, "Preaching will cease to be Christian preaching if the preacher loses confidence in the authority of the Bible as the Word of God and in the power of the spoken word to communicate the saving and transforming message of the Bible."[77] Ultimately what this does is it undermines whether the Bible can change someone's life any longer. At the heart of this concern is that biblical preaching is compromised for the power of secular words and thoughts.

The second observation made by Mohler is that *today's preaching is infatuated with technology*. While his skepticism comes across as an unwarranted bias, there are certainly some concerns that should be highlighted in the balance. Technology will only increase not decrease, which means that the use of it in preaching will be an ongoing issue. This is certainly a visual technological age, and in many cases that is how people learn. One can assume that the basis of Mohler's concern is that technology takes precedence over the written word. The use of technology in a message is not the problem, but the dependence on it being the source of transformational power is. These concerns are valid, and should be monitored, but the truth remains that technology is not going to be reduced in society. The church must address the issues

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[76] R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 16.

[77] Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 17.

or it will become paralyzed by its fear.

The third observation is that today's preaching *suffers from embarrassment of the text*. This general statement is based on the observation that some evangelicals avoid areas of scripture that are controversial or offensive. The gospel is by nature offensive and to avoid those areas of offense results in a limited gospel. The issue of authority can become compromised which enables the current postmodern philosophy. Those who compromise a text use excuses regarding cultural context and relevance in society. Mohler comments on this by saying, "Many of these preachers simply disregard and ignore vast sections of scripture, focusing instead on texts that are more comfortable, palatable, and non-confrontational to the modern mind. This is a form of pastoral neglect and malpractice, corrected only by a comprehensive embrace of the Bible-all of it-as the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God."[78] Solomon in 1 Kings 11 was willing to compromise his obedience to God because of the conflict of interest he had with his 700 wives and 300 concubines. They all worshipped other gods and Solomon veered away from the worship of God and built high places of worship for those other gods. This compromise of the truth resulted in God removing His Kingdom from Solomon, with the exception of one area that his son would oversee.

The fourth observation is that some preachers today *do not preach biblical content*, rather giving into the temptation to construct messages that are appealing to congregants. The problem with that is what appeals to the hearer, whether good or bad, takes time away from content. The content of the message must be satisfied for preaching to remain biblical. There is a central point in each text and that point must be focused on. The traditional emphasis that has been placed on narrative preaching over the years creates the challenge for the person to remain textually

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[78]Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 18-19.

focused. Generally speaking, congregants on the surface are becoming more biblically illiterate, and this is not the time to sacrifice the content of scripture.

The fifth observation under consideration is that much of today's preaching *does not address felt needs*. This concern is a contrast between expository or biblical preaching (the message being drawn from the text) and topical preaching (text is drawn from the topic) in nature. The nature of expositional preaching is that the message comes only from what the text says therefore the message of the Word is exposed. Topical or thematic preaching can have a reverse effect where the text becomes a means to an end not the end itself. This becomes psychological and therapeutic support for the congregation as a whole because the messages are derived from social concerns and ills not from the whole counsel of the Bible.

The six and final observation that Mohler discusses is that today's preaching has an *absence of the gospel*. The early church apostles had the good news at the core of their message. When Peter preached in Acts, it was the gospel that was central to his sermon. Paul preached later in Acts and was apologetic toward the gospel. At this point, Mohler quotes Spurgeon, "preach the Word, place it in its canonical context, and 'make a bee-line to the cross'."[79] Postmodernism finds that the gospel (the good news about Christ dying in the place of sinners) to be one possible truth is a sea of pluralism and universalism. Mohler says that "in the end, preaching devoid of this content-preaching that evades the biblical truth-falls short of anything we can rightly call *Christian* preaching."[80] In addition to the comment from Mohler, Christian preaching is simply stated biblical preaching. Biblical preaching in the local church context is the aim of this study.

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[79] Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 21.

[80] Ibid.

The absence of biblical preaching is the concern of many like that of Mohler. He

contends that without the influence of conservative mentors, the preaching fraternity is in danger:

"I am also concerned that dangerous trends and many popular examples threaten to undermine

the centrality of biblical exposition in evangelical pulpits."[81] Much of what Mohler is saying is

observable. While he has not given specific research to support the statements he has made, the

general principles of observation remain the same.

In addressing the problems in preaching to a postmodern culture, a clear understanding of

preaching is critical. There have been many definitions shared at this point of what preaching and

what expository means, but for the sake of this thesis it will be considered Biblical preaching to a

postmodern culture.

The term *biblical preaching* is used instead of expository preaching due to the varied

ideas of what expository means. Using the term biblical not only simplifies but it also returns to

the concept of biblical authority which is one of the challenges facing the preacher of a post-

modern context. This context will set a standard or rule using the Bible as its foundation.

Many of the biblical concepts or phrases associated with preaching are: "to tell the good

news" (Luke 1:19), "to be a herald or announcer" (Matthew 3:1), and "proclaim the message" (2

Timothy 4:2). The most common of these is "to be a herald or announcer." The preacher is

considered a herald of the good news. There is proclamation with the good news as its object or

content of heralding.

Jerry Sutton provides a comprehensive definition of biblical preaching, "Biblical

preaching is the event of verbally communicating a message that is rooted in Scripture by a

spokesman representing God to either believers (for the purpose of communicating His truth,

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[81] Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 21.

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reproof, correction, and instruction), or to unbelievers (with a view to their conversion or judgment) with the ultimate intention of bringing all hearers into Christian maturity and the culture into Christian conformity."[82] This summary provides a fitting description of not only the person but the process of preaching. The end goal as stated by Sutton is to bring Christians into maturity and to transform the culture in which one lives.

This idea of transforming culture is not foreign to the New Testament writers. Paul wrote his letters in order to encourage the churches to remain faithful in the middle of the cultural chaos that surrounded them. This chaos is similar to contemporary society in that it was influenced by worldly passions and desires. To combat the challenges faced in postmodern society and the ECM preaching will have to influence and address the issues faced in culture. The church no longer has the luxury of withdrawing and avoiding society; it has to engage it and proclaim the good news of the gospel. Although God spoke to the ancient world in its own languages and cultures, he intended his Word to be for all peoples in all cultures, including those in contemporary culture; therefore, the biblical expositor is more than an exegete. The exegete explains the original meaning of the text. While the expositor goes further and applies it to the modern world.[83] Engaging culture may be the most challenging part of preaching. Preaching that does not engage culture is not biblical preaching according to these definitions.

Spurgeon himself defines preaching through a series of addresses to the students at his college: "Ministers are here in to imitate God, and to their best endeavor, to instruct peoples in Godliness, and to teach them what to believe and practice, and then to stir them up in act and

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[82] Jerry Sutton, *A Primer on Biblical Preaching*: excerpt from Spurgeon's Lectures To My Students, (Nashville, TN: Cross Books), 32-33.

[83] Robinson and Larson, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 30.

deed, to do what they are instructed to do."[84] So it is according to these words that peaching involves stirring people to respond to the message in a way that promotes godliness and obedience to God's Word.

The issue at hand is not redefining what biblical preaching is, the previously stated definitions serve as a sufficient guide, the issue is how to apply these definitions to the current climate of preaching. Once again it will serve as an example for building a model by evaluating some principles that Charles Spurgeon applied.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a Case Study

There are few preachers who have influenced preaching like that of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon's years at the New Park Street Baptist Church signifies the beginning of a great ministry and was followed with the transition to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. This progression of Spurgeon as a young preacher to a seasoned Christ-Centered communicator provides valuable insight into preaching an ancient text in a changing culture.

Michael Quicke provides some information regarding preaching in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*. In this selection of the text Quicke also classifies Charles Spurgeon's style of preaching. First he describes the *preacher/teacher*. This is the preacher throughout history that has been known for explaining verse by verse portions of scripture. They comprehend the doctrinal truths in scripture and give great detail in explaining them during their sermons. They are recognized not as much for their delivery as they are for their in-depth knowledge. Modern examples would be John Stott and Jon MacArthur.

The next style that he mentions is the preacher that is considered a *herald*. These preachers are charismatic in the preaching events themselves. They have a strong flare for

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[84] Jerry Sutton, *A Primer on Biblical Preaching*: excerpt from Spurgeon's Lectures To My Students, 30.

propositional truth and deductive reasoning form the text. They are considered left brain

preachers while the pastor/teacher is more right brain and cerebral. The herald is more dramatic

and focuses on the topics more than the details. They are more evangelistic in style. Some

examples of this style of preaching are Billy Graham and Martin Luther.

The next style is what Quicke refers to as the *inductive* style preacher. This form begins

with the hearer in mind. This is opposed to the deductive method that begins with the text; this

method begins with the need of the hearer. The inductive method is common in addressing

social, political, or apologetic concerns. Some examples are preachers such as John Maxwell or

Bill Hybells. The inductive approach is common among evangelists.

The next style of preacher that Quicke comments on is the *narrative* style preacher. This

style finds the story in the text. The sermon is presented in story form. Consequently there are

many who believe this is the best approach in preaching to postmodern congregations. The most

notable preachers in this category are Calvin Miller and Max Lucado.

Quicke alludes to the different periods of history being more prominent with one style in

particular. He refers to the nineteenth century as the" golden age" for the *herald*. Among those

popular during this time period are Charles Simeon, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, and the

focus of this study, Charles Spurgeon. Part of the characteristic of this time period was "mass

evangelism" efforts.[85]

In the book *Representative Modern Preachers*, Spurgeon is classified as a "Puritan

Pastoral Evangelist." While Spurgeon preached with pastoral considerations, he was also well-

suited as an evangelist. That he was classified as an evangelistic style preacher works well with

the designation given previously by Quicke. This book gives some insight into the characteristics

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[85] Robinson and Larsen, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 64-67.

of Spurgeon's preaching that make him such. One of the things is that meets this qualification is the influence of puritan evangelists.

Spurgeon as a young man was influenced by many preachers. His hours spent daily in reading naturally made an impression on the young preacher. Although he did have not a collegiate career or formal seminary training, Spurgeon could be accounted among some of the most brilliant minds as a result of his hours of reading each day and a photographic memory.

Of those that influenced Spurgeon were John Wesley, George Whitefield, his predecessors at New Park Street (Benjamin Keach, John Gill, and John Rippon), and the Puritans such as John Bunyan. None of these were clearer of an influence than George Whitefield, "His fresh style and forceful Anglo-Saxon discourse connected, and clearly Whitefield was his model."[86]

The same preaching style of Spurgeon is certainly applicable to a postmodern context. The advantage of focusing solely on Spurgeon was that Spurgeon was a local church pastor. Although Spurgeon never allowed himself to be referred to as *reverend*, because he did not believe in ordination, he was still the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He oversaw the overall ministries of the church, while exploiting his speaking and writing abilities. It will be useful to consider the model of preaching and the content of his sermons for developing a method of biblical preaching for a new pastor in a postmodern local church context. Some of the very same principles that will be drawn from looking at the ministry of Spurgeon form the years of New Park Street to the fruitful years of the Metropolitan Tabernacle will provide valuable insight into the timeless truths of preaching in the local church.

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[86] David L. Larsen, *The Company of Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 584.

There are a few reasons why would one consider Spurgeon to be a worthy case study for a method of preaching in the contemporary local church context. First, Spurgeon's popularity makes him a worthy study. The influence of one man has not been equaled since the time of Spurgeon. There have been plenty that have influenced preached and to a great impact: Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley, Graham, Falwell, and others. While these are all worthy candidates, none have had the mass influence that Spurgeon has through preaching, writing, and lecturing.

Second, the fruit of his ministry warrants further examination. Spurgeon maintained a congregation of nearly 6,000 throughout most of his ministry. At times, he would preach to even more people through open air preaching or other venues. People faithfully attended his services despite his criticisms, trials, and controversies. For nearly forty years people flocked to hear the popular preacher. Not only did people attend, they responded, and Spurgeon was able to see people give their hearts and their lives to the Lord through his preaching.

The third reason Spurgeon is a good study is because of his genuineness. Spurgeon had real struggles, and he worked through them like most. He had bouts with depression and was able to overcome. Also Spurgeon was not a formally educated man. He was merely a self-motivated person who had a passion for preaching.

Fourth, the principles which Spurgeon applied to preaching are useful today. That is not to say that 19th Century English should be used in pulpits today, but the principles that he used in preparing and presentation are timeless and adaptable to culture.

Spurgeon also had similar challenges during the *Down-Grade Controversy* compared to what is happening with the ECM and the church today. Like Driscoll, Spurgeon was separated from the Baptist Union because of their core statements regarding matters of theology and

scripture. On October 28, 1887 Spurgeon withdrew from the Baptist Union. In an attempt to unify the Free Church, the Union refused to adopt a statement of clear doctrinal conclusions. Spurgeon suggested that the Union make clear evangelical alliances. The Union would not acknowledge that Spurgeon had addressed the issues and later would send four Doctors of Divinity to question him; ultimately this lead to the Union voting for "censure" of Spurgeon.

Spurgeon struggled with the lasting effects of modern thought in his time. Spurgeon was not a stranger to preaching in tumultuous times, and he commented on the challenge he was faced with, "I used to hear that Evangelical writers produced platitudes; I believe they did, but surely they never wrote more watery trash than is published in the present day in opposition to the orthodox faith; but them, you see, it is given out in such a Latinized jargon that its obscurity is mistaken for profundity." He continues by commenting on modernism, "If you have the time and patience to read a little of what is written by the modern-thought gentlemen, you will not be long before you are weary of their word-spinning , their tinkering of old heresies into original thought, and their general mystifying of plain things."[87]

Spurgeon describes what he was trying to overcome in a message to preachers from his college. In this message, he describes the main characteristics of that day. First, he refers to *ritualism*. This is superstition and the use of mystics. Next he refers to what he simply calls *unbelief*. This is the absence of an orthodox faith. He further calls it *abounding unbelief*. This signifies that it was more than just a lack of concern for anything spiritual. Spurgeon is concerned about the digression from truth as it is compared with science. Next he shows great concern for the *disintegration of denominational support*. In this, he was concerned about the lack of support for the orthodox denominations that worried him. The fourth concern was the

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[87] Charles H. Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 97.

progression of wickedness, especially drunkenness, in the land. According to Spurgeon, the lack

of morals in 19th Century England was more prominent than ever.

In another chapter of *An All Round Ministry,* Spurgeon comments on what he refers to as

The Evils of The Present Time. The first evil that he considers is the questioning of *fundamental*

truth. His concern was that the Bible had become less of an authority and modern thought had

become more of an authority. For many ages the question of a fundamental truth has been an

issue. Spurgeon was concerned that many were *misrepresenting and distorting the truth*. Paul

warns his readers about those who "preach another doctrine." Another evil that concerns

Spurgeon is those *preachers who compromise the truth and remain neutral on doctrinal issues*.

Men who once were considered godly had begun to waiver on their foundation. This was not just

preachers, but the professors of the educational institutions apparently had begun to compromise

as well: "those who are our brethren in the faith of our Lord Jesus, but who do not seem to have

made up their minds as to separation from error. Good, easy men, they are all for peace! 'Sitting

on the fence' seems to be a popular position among many professors just now. I have, with

commendable forethought, endeavored to drive a number of tenterhooks and other useful nails

into the top of that fence, to assist them in retaining their hold; but I fear they are not deeply

grateful to me."[88] It is obvious that Spurgeon's position was not popular with some, but he never

stopped pleading his case. He continues by saying, "theirs is a position which I never was able to

occupy myself, and therefore I have no very profound sympathy with them. One or two learned

divines are trying their utmost to get down on both sides of the fence; but it is a perilous

experiment."[89] Spurgeon's position on many issues would eventually cost him relationships

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[88] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 290.

[89] Ibid.

among his peers, but that was of no concern to him; he was only concerned with pleasing his Lord.

Another great evil that concerned Spurgeon was what he referred to as *the insatiable cravings for amusements*. Apparently some had organized programs in the church that were for entertainment more than worship and word. Spurgeon in his notable character of sarcasm says, "What is to be next done in our chapels? To what length of tomfoolery will ministers of the gospel yet go? Amusements beneath the contempt of idiots have been tolerated in our schoolrooms."[90] According to this statement, the schools had created places of entertainment instead of learning, and Spurgeon warned against this mindset in the church. He comments to the pastors, "It has not come to that yet with us, personally; but brethren we ourselves have to battle hard against it, for the people are all agog for these vanities, and there are so many societies and institutions more or less remotely connected with our churches that it is difficult for us to keep them all from wandering."[91] The fear was that the church would give in to the pressures of society and what has been called an "attraction" based model of church. This combined with the last evil, *the loss of attraction to the preaching of the gospel*. Though he did not believe the gospel had lost its power to draw men, he was concerned that men would not allow themselves to be drawn. They simply had quit coming to hear the message preached as in times past. These were the evils that coincided with the challenges of the age for Spurgeon as a preacher.

Modernism at its early stages was the philosophical climate that Spurgeon found himself preaching in. The problems that faced Spurgeon's society (modern thought) are not dissimilar

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[90] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 293-294.

[91] Ibid., 293-294.

from the challenges that face today's society (postmodern thought). Millard Erickson goes into great detail to describe modernism. There are some similarities to postmodernism, but there are also points of distinct differences.[92] The first of these traits is that reality is only found in what can be observed (naturalism). The second trait is that humanity is the focus of the universe (humanism). The third trait is simply that humans are advanced animals (reductionism). The fourth trait is that knowledge is good because it leads to advancement (progress). The fifth trait is that evolution is the source of life not a supernatural being (nature). The sixth of these is that things can be known for certain (certainty). The next one is (determinism) that all things have stationary reasons. The eighth trait (individualism) says that each person is sovereign and can know truth. The final trait (anti-authoritarianism) each person is a mediator of truth individually. René Descartes was the founder of this movement and after many realizations through war and human depravity, modernism was considered a disappointment. This caused the shift to postmodern thought.[93]

There may be some different trends, but ultimately they both question the validity and authority and scripture of man's ability to reason and dictate truth. Spurgeon refused to bow down to the gods of his day. He devoted himself to preaching what he knew to be truth. One must consider his way of preaching because he was so successful at it. His success may not be blueprinted, but it certainly provides sound guidance for the mindset and approach to preaching in a difficult time.

Another consideration is that he was a man that had the blessing of God on his life. There are people in scripture like David who was providentially used by God to accomplish His plan.

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[92] Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology*, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 159.

[93] Towns and Stetzer, 157-158.

Even after David committed grievous sins, God still used him and blessed him. Spurgeon was a man with God's hand on him and the fruit of his ministry proves that. There would be no hesitation to study the lives of David and Solomon to gain an understanding of leadership principles. While it may be said that these men were part of the infallible Word and Spurgeon was not, one can still draw implications from people that God has anointed for certain purposes.

CHAPTER 2

The Formative Years

Charles Haddon Spurgeon has published a library of works throughout his life and it has continued until present day. In an article by Lynn May, it is stated that Spurgeon published around 4,000 individual sermons and 135 books. His book *Lectures to My Students* sold 500,000 copies, and *John Ploughman's Pictures* sold 300,000 copies. One of his popular commentary series, a seven volume set on *The Treasury of David* sold 130,000 sets.[94]

Spurgeon displayed charisma as a preacher. His influence has spanned over one hundred years of Baptist history. Even though Spurgeon was charismatic with his personality, he also was a deep man of God. He was very devoted to his theology. After further review, the Christian who reads Spurgeon will find much more than just devotional and motivational teaching; they will find someone committed to their core beliefs.

The formative years for Spurgeon would prove to be the foundation for his success as a minister. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born in Kelvedon, England on June 19, 1834. Spurgeon was only there for a few months when his father moved the family to Colchester when he was not even a year old.[95] After only a few months Spurgeon was taken to live with his grandparents in Stambourne. The reason for this move is not clear; however, the influences that Spurgeon would have while living with his grandparents would be some of the greatest influences in his life.

Much of Spurgeon's influence can be directly attributed to the nurturing of his parents

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[94] Lynn E. May, ed., "Charles Haddon Spurgeon 150th anniversary, Special Issue," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19, no. 4 (October 1984): 2-44. http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/ pdfviewer?sid=e5102370-17c6-4111-9900-0b8f7d9d8d80 %40sessionmgr10&vid=10&hid=119 (accessed February 20, 2012).

[95] Bob L. Ross, *A Pictorial Biography of C.H. Spurgeon*, 2nd ed. (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publication, 1981), 13.

and grandparents. Spurgeon was surrounded by ministers in his family. Spurgeon's father, John was a Congregationalist minister, and his mother was a godly woman and considered to be one of the greatest influences in his life. The Spurgeon's had seventeen children, nine of which died at infancy.[96] Spurgeon has said , "no teaching ever made such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother; neither can I conceive that, to any child, there can be one who will have such influence over the young heart as the mother who has so tenderly cared for her offspring."[97] It was evident that Spurgeon was greatly influenced by his mother as well his father.

Spurgeon was also influenced by his grandparents. He went to go live with his grandparents at Stambourne. Spurgeon's grandfather was also an Independent Congregationalist Minister. The line of succession would fall to Charles and his brother James to carry on the tradition. Spurgeon was surrounded by Godly people, and this in many ways was pastoral training at its best.

Stambourne would be a place where Spurgeon would form much of his theological base. There was a room on the upper floor there that was designed to be a pastor's study. This library of theology was the place where Spurgeon would sit for hours as a young child and read many of the early theologians. Regarding this place, Spurgeon's autobiography relates: "Here I first struck up acquaintance with the martyr's, and especially with 'Old Bonner' who burned them; next, with Bunyan and his 'Pilgrim;' and further on, with the great masters of Scriptural theology, with whom no moderns are worthy to be named in the same day."[98] From this, it is

[96] Ross, *A Pictorial Biography of C.H. Spurgeon.*, 14.

[97] Ibid.

notable first that Spurgeon had a desire for learning at an early age. It is obvious that without the distractions from the city life, Spurgeon invested his time wisely in reading. Secondly, Spurgeon expressed an early desire for theology. This desire was not just for devotional reading, but for doctrinal study as well.

One of the most significant influences of his life was his grandfather. Spurgeon attended many of his services in Stambourne. His idea of how church should be done came directly from these meetings as well as the time spent in conversation with his grandfather about hymns and sermons. It was evident that God placed men and women around Spurgeon to help form the man he became. When it came time for Spurgeon to leave his grandfather, it was difficult for him to separate.[99]

Spurgeon's formative years were focused on studies, not physical activities. His days at Stockwell School in Colchester were influential in his life. Spurgeon received academic rewards, and he gained the notice of the teachers, especially the clergy. It was at the Church of England School where he interacted and was noticed by the clergy. Spurgeon proved to be wise for his age.[100] It was this period in Spurgeon's life where the beginnings of his theology began to form.

Spurgeon's parents began at an early age praying and pleading for the salvation of young Charles. His mother was especially influential in this part of his life. Spurgeon, however, was reluctant to talk to his parents about these matters. Spurgeon struggled through the early part of his life while God was preparing him for his conversion. All of the influences, prayers, and

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[98] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I: The Early Years.* 1897. Reprint (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 11.

[99] Ibid., 21.

[100] Ibid, 35-36.

sermons he had been exposed to were bringing him to the climax of his relationship with God.[101]

It was through this determination of prayer and the working of the Holy Spirit on Spurgeon that

he became a follower of Christ.

After an intense search on the part of Spurgeon to come to an understanding of who God

was in his life, it was a snow storm that directed his path. On a snowy morning as Spurgeon

began walking to his church nine miles away, the snow became such a hindrance that Spurgeon

was redirected to a Primitive Methodist Church for worship. The snow was such that the regular

preacher was snowed in and unable to attend. A man there took the responsibility of preaching

that morning. Spurgeon was not impressed with the intellectual ability of this man; however, the

passage spoken that morning was simple but profound, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the

ends of the earth."[102] The passage proved to be sufficient for when the man gave an invitation

following the reading of this text, Spurgeon came to an understanding of who God was in his

life. Through the Providence of God, Spurgeon was converted on January 6, 1850.[103]

Spurgeon was able to describe in great detail his conversion the rest of his life. His

eloquent description of that experience leaves no room for doubt among those who read his

account. It was at this point that the loving relationship Spurgeon had for his Lord begun. For

Spurgeon, there was no question about the conversion experience. All the turmoil he felt in his

soul prior to that day was lifted. Spurgeon was bombarded as a child with the gospel, but on this

particular day God revealed Himself to him through that providential meeting at the Primitive

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[101] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I: The Early Years*, 53-76.

[102] Ibid., 87
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[103] Ibid, 89.

Methodist Church. Spurgeon's life would never be the same after this day. [104]

It would be impossible to speak of Charles Haddon Spurgeon without knowing the preacher. Spurgeon has been referred to as "The people's preacher."[105] Spurgeon did not lack popularity among the people. He displayed a style of preaching that was not common in the time he preached. In his early twenties, Spurgeon had already preached to thousands. Spurgeon's printed material became as popular as his services. Spurgeon's philosophy and encouragement to young preachers was to "make the pulpit your first business."[106] It is evident that Spurgeon lived by his own advice.

Spurgeon preached his first sermon at sixteen. It was evident, to those who heard him preach, that he was truly gifted. Spurgeon's first sermon was a Sunday school talk that was used at Teversham while he was a member at St. Andrew's Street Baptist Church. This church had a lay preachers association of which Spurgeon became involved.[107] After this, his preaching opportunities came regularly.

Spurgeon left his impression on Waterbeach. Waterbeach, known for its drunkenness and careless living, was plagued with sin. Spurgeon entered the town with the ambition to save all. His first night there he was invited to be the house guest of a couple. The couple's son stayed in the same bed with Spurgeon that Saturday night. Spurgeon knelt to pray before he went to bed as always. He noticed that the young man he was staying with did not. Spurgeon began to talk to him about going to bed without asking for God's protection through the night. Before the night

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[104] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I: The Early Years*, 88-96.

[105] Larsen, *A Company of Preachers,* 583.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ross, 29.

had ended, Spurgeon had the young man out of the bed and praying for conversion.[108] The next time Spurgeon stayed with the family, he stayed with the young man again. Spurgeon woke from a dreadful dream that he had about judgment and those who would experience it. Spurgeon spent the rest of the night sharing this dream with the young man. The next morning in the service, Spurgeon preached a message unlike any other, in which he vividly described the dream and the horrors of judgment.[109]

Spurgeon's time in Waterbeach was well spent, in that "he practically converted the town."[110] Spurgeon passionately preached everywhere he could, from the chapel to the streets. Waterbeach grew and set the standard that would follow Spurgeon throughout his career.

New Park Street Chapel

It was not long until the New Park Street Chapel in London pursued the young Spurgeon. Spurgeon was pleasantly surprised at the inquiry into his services at the chapel. The chapel was known for its pastors prior to Spurgeon. Those men who preceded Spurgeon were Benjamin Keach, John Gill, and John Rippon.

New Park Street Chapel had all the elements of a growing church, except Spurgeon. The church had wealth; it had people, and popularity. The thing that New Park Street Chapel lacked was passion. That is what Spurgeon had the most of. It was already evident at this point that Spurgeon had the kind of charisma that it takes to lead a church. It becomes more evident at his time in London. Spurgeon's popularity grew at New Park Street Chapel like it did at

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[108] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 192.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ross, 30.

Waterbeach.[111] As a result, the church grew exponentially, and space soon became a problem.

Spurgeon preached against traditionalism and preached for revival.[112]

This was the most popular period of Spurgeon's life. The time he spent in London marked his place in Christian history. The area of town was in ruins when Spurgeon got there. The year 1856 becomes a landmark year for Spurgeon. Spurgeon preached to large crowds that required the use of Exeter Hall and the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. Spurgeon commented that he saw a thousand people converted that year. Spurgeon was only twenty-two in 1856.[113] These conversions gained Spurgeon popularity among his peers and the people of London.

It was also during this time that Spurgeon's popularity drew attention to critics. At the age of twenty- two, Spurgeon experienced great blessings and also great struggle. Spurgeon's wife became his rock during this period. The days when Spurgeon struggled, his wife would use a familiar text that was hung on the bedroom in their home: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."[114]

The critics were not the only reason Spurgeon struggled. During the first service at Exeter Hall, while preaching a service to thousands, someone screamed "fire" and a mass of people tried to exit the building. Spurgeon, unaware that many were being trampled, continued to preach. At some point in the sermon, it was realized that seven had died and many were hurt.

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[111] Ross, 34-35.

[112] Ian H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 21-22.

[113] Ibid., 27.

[114] Ibid., 28.

Though he eventually returned, Spurgeon struggled with returning to the pulpit.[115]

Spurgeon's critics may have done him better than harm. His name had become so popular in the media that many came to the chapel just to hear Spurgeon. Lives were being changed as a result, and the revival that he talked about was taking place. Spurgeon's preaching became popular everywhere, and he attributed the revival to the prayer meetings and the work of the Holy Spirit. A man in Scotland said this about Spurgeon preaching in Glasgow, "Here, at last, is a preacher to my mind; one whom not only I, but whom Paul himself, I am persuaded, where he on earth, would hear, approve, and own."[116]

Spurgeon's success was related to many factors. Firstly, he was simply gifted at oratory. Spurgeon related to his congregation better than anyone else could. Secondly, his illustrations were common place and he had an amazing way of giving vivid descriptions of simple truths. His natural ability, with his devotion to the study of God's Word, would further assure his success as a preacher.[117] These along with simple determination made Charles Spurgeon not only well-recognized, but successful, as a preacher.

There were few who could preach like Spurgeon. He was said to have spoken "at a rate of 140 words per minute." This was more than the average. It has also been said that his voice was "strong, clear, bell like, which could be heard by an audience of very many thousands."[118] At one point, Spurgeon preached to 23,654 people at the Crystal Palace in 1857.[119] Spurgeon captivated

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[115] Ross, 49.

[116] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 335.

[117] Murray, 35.

[118] Ross, 51.

[119] Ibid., 50.

his audience with a unique gift for preaching. This however presented a challenge for the church. The more popularity he gained, the larger the crowds were. Spurgeon and his team of deacons began to plan the building the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle

The process of building was guided by Spurgeon himself. Spurgeon felt that as soon as the building was to be completed, it would be full. He was confident that it would make the church a spiritual force in the area. Spurgeon encouraged the congregation to give as they could. The money came in and there was excitement in London over the possibilities. There were more than 250 architects who wanted the project to undertake this monumental task. The building had a chapel that would seat 3,000 and had two galleries that would seat a thousand each. The lecture hall below accommodated 800 people. The inside of the Surrey Music Hall was the desired design for acoustics. Acoustics were important due to the large crowds and lack of amplification. This was a phenomenal facility in the 1800's to be used for a church. London had never seen this kind of excitement over church before.[120]

The first meeting of the Tabernacle was held on Tuesday March 21, 1860. At this point the Tabernacle had not been completed. Work continued on to finish the project. The meeting consisted of Spurgeon discussing the architecture of the building. Spurgeon expressed his desire for the building and the ministries that would flow from it. On Monday March 18, the church had its first prayer meeting. Monday of the next week, the church gathered again. Spurgeon preached "from Acts 5:42: 'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and

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[120] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II: The Full Harvest.* 1897. Reprint (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 5-6.

preach Jesus Christ'."[121] This was a fitting beginning for the church. In this passage it described

exactly what Charles Haddon Spurgeon believed in. The Tabernacle was not made for grandeur;

rather, it was built to accommodate the crowds that were gathering. Spurgeon explained in the

first meeting that the building was built prayerfully so that money would not be wasted and the

building would meet the church's needs. Spurgeon praised the efforts of the builder, who was a

member of his church, and commented that he would not hesitate to use him again. He also

assured the people that the builder did not take advantage and never questioned changes that

were made to help with the cost of the building. [122]

Spurgeon revealed an administrative side to his ministry during this process. It was

apparent that he was able to balance ministry with administration. He was remembered for his

preaching and soul winning, but he was also an incredible leader. He shows that pastoring a

church is more than the glory of preaching with his ability to lead the church through this

building project.

The media questioned Spurgeon's motives in preaching by claiming that he was seeking

notoriety through his preaching. They criticized his messages, pointing out what appeared to be

bits of entertaining humor. Nothing was furtherer from the truth. Spurgeon considered the pulpit

to be a place of reverence. To Spurgeon the pulpit was "the most solemn spot in the world."[123]

Although Spurgeon had a tremendous way of illustrating his points and was very passionate in

his presentation, his focus was on the content. There is no question that Spurgeon had a filling of

the Spirit, and there was certainly no lack of insight into the word. It is rare that one can balance

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[121] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II: The Full Harvest*, 41.

[122] Ibid., 37-40.

[123] Murray, 39.

emotion and content, yet Spurgeon successfully balanced the two and used his charisma to communicate deep truths from God's Word. The media could challenge Spurgeon's message, but they could not argue with the results of the depth of his ministry in London.

Spurgeon was serious about his preaching, but he was equally serious about his theology. Spurgeon made no apologies for the system of theology that he held to called Calvinism. Spurgeon may be remembered as the charismatic preacher and leader of The New Park Street Church and the pastor of the famous Metropolitan Tabernacle, but it was here in his theological system that one sees the real Charles Spurgeon. From his childhood in the upper room at his grandparent's house in Stambourne, Spurgeon spent many hours studying theology and doctrine, which formed the foundation for his beliefs.

It was no secret what Spurgeon held to doctrinally. "Mr. Spurgeon is a Calvinist, which few of the dissenting ministers in London now are. He preaches salvation, not of man's will, but of the Lord's good will, which few in London, it is to be feared, now do."[124] From this, it is clear that Spurgeon held closely to the doctrine of the election of grace.[125]

Spurgeon is not to be confused with what is considered to be the *Hyper-Calvinist*. The *Hyper-Calvinist* "is an attempt to square all gospel truth with God's purpose to save the elect, denies there is a universal command to repent and believe, and asserts that we have only warrant to invite to Christ those who are conscious of a sense of sin and need."[126] The extreme position in this system did not believe in a universal call, but a selective call to repentance and belief. They would say that only the select few are available for salvation and there is no effort that can

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[124] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II: The Full Harvest*, 46.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 49.

be made to change the elect. Whether or not Spurgeon held to this part of limited atonement is not completely clear. What is clear is that Spurgeon did not waiver in his passion and desire to preach the gospel to all.

Spurgeon was criticized for his theology. His stance against the extreme *Arminian* position caused the media to question Spurgeon. Some would even associate him with the *Hyper-Calvinist* position. Spurgeon however was not an extremist on any side that is associated with one man's doctrine. It would be more fitting to state that he was an extreme Christian. In fact, the words of Calvin himself best describe his position: "The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, is the truth that I must preach today, or else be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again."[127] Spurgeon may have been criticized, but he never wavered on his beliefs.

In Spurgeon's doctrine there was a couple of things he could not accept. Firstly, he could not accept the Arminian position that one can *fall from grace*. He thought it was absurd to think that what God had given in *His Sovereign Grace* could be lost. Secondly, he thought it was absurd to think that there was any other way to salvation than that of Christ. Spurgeon's definition of Calvinism was "Salvation is of the Lord."[128]The position that said anything different, whether it is Arminian or any other was heresy to Spurgeon. He would hold to this doctrine throughout his entire life until he died in 1892. It was Spurgeon's belief that one should

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[127] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II: The Full Harvest*, 58-59.

[128] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 168.

not waiver on their doctrine; to do so would affect their ministry.[129]

It was preaching grace that Spurgeon devoted much of his time to. There was no question in his mind that Ephesians 2:8;" for it is by grace you have been saved", was the experience of the genuine believer. Spurgeon would also understand that no one is worthy of God's grace and that "God justifies the ungodly." These truths were emphasized repeatedly in his book *All of Grace*.[130] Spurgeon understood that justification was impossible apart from the sovereign grace of God. Spurgeon opposed Arminian theology that suggested that the individual had anything to do with their salvation other than respond. Spurgeon talked of his childhood and how the Arminian theology was popular in London as well as his family. Spurgeon concluded from his own studies that it was all of God, not of the individual.[131]

Ian Murray list three reasons why Spurgeon opposed Armenian's theology so adamantly. First, it affects the entire belief system. This theology changes the whole dynamic of the doctrine of redemption. Secondly, he felt the system led to legalism. In other words the individual could manipulate salvation based on individual merit. Thirdly, Spurgeon said that this view lessened the sinners need for the Savior. It would suggest that the individual's condition is not as bad as being totally depraved.[132]

Following a six-year stint of preaching, Spurgeon went to Geneva for a break, where his theology would become real to him. While there, Spurgeon was afforded the opportunity to go to Calvin's house during the trip. Spurgeon was also given the opportunity to preach at Calvin's

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[129] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II: The Full Harvest*, 163-168.

[130] Charles H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace: New Edition* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2009).

[131] Murray, 73-76.

[132] Ibid. 74-88.

church while wearing his robe. Spurgeon considered this to be quite an honor, because Calvin strongly influenced Spurgeon's theology. Spurgeon also understood that most of Calvin's teachings were influenced by Augustine. Spurgeon's trip to Geneva excited him about his theology even more.[133]

Spurgeon continued to fight an ongoing battle due to his theology, yet there was no question that Spurgeon was always willing to stand firm in his beliefs. The next two controversies would support Spurgeon's convictions even more. The next battle that ensued for Spurgeon was over baptismal regeneration. In 1864, Spurgeon preached a message that challenged the resurgence of Papal authority within Protestantism. The question of infant baptism was once again a doctrinal issue for the Baptist, and Spurgeon did not back down from the criticism that followed his sermon.[134]

The last battle that Spurgeon fought before his death was the *Down Grade Controversy*. This battle was fought over the liberalism that had been filtered into the denomination. The issue was one of scriptural interpretation. The problem was that many had begun to question the methods and sources used in interpreting the scriptures. Spurgeon challenged the questions being raised and called for the denomination to return to the conservative stances it once held. Spurgeon's own denomination would separate ties with him, and this last battle hurt Spurgeon's popularity among the media though Spurgeon's congregation continued to follow their pastor, despite the controversies that he was involved in.[135]

Through all the doctrinal controversies, Spurgeon maintained that Calvinism was the

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[133] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II*, 29-32.

[134] Murray, 135-143.

[135] Ibid, 179-201.

belief system he associated with the most. There would never be a reason however to question

that he considered himself a Christian above all. Spurgeon believed in the truth and authority of

the scriptures. He did not hesitate to preach the truth, which he found in his studies. Once again,

Spurgeon's own words best describe his theology:

> We only use the term 'Calvinism' for shortness. That doctrine which is called
> "Calvinism" did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder
> of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine.
> Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from diligent
> study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus
> Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because
> we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin are having taught these doctrines. We
> would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which
> would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact.[136]

Spurgeon's personal life was riddled with highs and lows. His legacy could be

meaningful because of how he responded to the circumstances surrounding his personal life.

Spurgeon is remembered for his charisma, but one hardly finds the praise of how he persevered

in the times of trial. The true test of one's integrity and character comes in the middle of trial and

testing, not in the middle of glory. These are the situations that also defined Spurgeon.

Spurgeon was not only interested in his ministry, he was interested in beginning a family.

Spurgeon found his companion in Miss. Susannah Thompson. She attended New Park Street

prior to their engagement. She does not describe it in a way that they knew from the very

beginning that they would be married. After a period of spending time together socially, they

began to development emotions that went beyond that of acquaintance. The two were married on

January 8, 1856. Mrs. Spurgeon describes it as a "dreamland of excitement."[137] Spurgeon had the

privilege of baptizing his wife, and their devotion to one another was evident in their support

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[136] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 162.

[137] Ibid., 300.

during difficult times. At the age of thirty-three, Susannah had surgery related to ongoing medical problems. This limited her physical ability, but she was always at her husband's side as he ministered. It was Susannah who encouraged Charles when he struggled with his emotions. The two faced many obstacles in their lives, but never lost their devotion to one another.

Charles and his wife had twins, who they named Charles and Thomas. The two eventually became ministers, with Thomas fulfilling his father's dream and eventually becoming the pastor at the Tabernacle. Though the surety of this was initially in doubt, Spurgeon devoted much prayer to the issue, and eventually it became reality. Thomas was the pastor from 1894 to 1908, in which he followed his father as pastor of one of the most historical congregations in the Baptist faith.[138]

Not all of Spurgeon's personal life was what he would desire. It has already been mentioned that Susannah suffered from illness, but Spurgeon himself suffered from illness as well. His illness became most noticeable after his fiftieth birthday. He suffered from "rheumatism, lumbago, and sciatica."[139] The weather affected these diseases, so Spurgeon would go to Mentone in Southern France during November, December and January.[140] It was during this time that Spurgeon would rest and try to regain his energy from the exhausting task of ministry. The church supported Spurgeon during this time, even encouraging him to take more time on occasions to assure he was getting the proper rest.

It has already been mentioned that Spurgeon had a tendency for depression or emotional illness at times. This would compound Spurgeon's problems. The fruit of his faithfulness during

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[138] Warren W. Wiersbe, *50 People Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 241-245.

[139] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II*, 385.

[140] Ibid., 406.

this time would be a greater compassion for those who suffered in his ministry. Spurgeon's family was amazed at his perseverance through these trials. His depression gave him a greater understanding of those who suffered at the Tabernacle. Spurgeon also used this time to write. In one letter to the church Spurgeon writes, "I am altogether stranded. I am not at all able to leave my bed, or to find much rest upon it. The pains of rheumatism, lumbago, and sciatica, mingled together, are exceedingly sharp. If I happened to turn a little to the right hand or to the left I am soon aware that I am dwelling in a body capable of the most acute suffering. However, I am as happy and cheerful as a man can be."[141] This was written in 1884, over seven years before his death in 1892. There were times later when he was not able to even write due to the pain he was feeling. Spurgeon would make this time as fruitful as one could, despite his complications.

There were two things that Spurgeon was known for. First was his wit that he used inside the pulpit and out. Spurgeon often used wit to respond to his critics and those who ridiculed him. Second was his love for smoking cigars. Spurgeon was seen on many occasions smoking cigars in public. This was not something that he thought was wrong or contrary to God's Word. It was common among some preachers of Spurgeon's day to smoke cigars. Here is a dialogue that displays Spurgeon's humor with a Methodist preacher who questioned Spurgeon's habit: "If I ever find myself smoking to excess, I promise I shall quit entirely." "What would you call smoking to excess?" "Why, smoking two cigars at the same time."[142] This shows the humor that Spurgeon communicated with. Even in some of his most dark times, he would find ways to brighten the moment.

Spurgeon's personal life was very colorful as was he. There was no lack of entertainment,

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[141] Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Suffering Letters of C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Wakemen Trust, 2007), 56.

[142] Wiersbe, 145.

passion, earnestness, integrity, and Christ-likeness. The day would come when Spurgeon would enter into the final rest that he had worked so hard to experience. On January 31, 1892, Susannah was with her husband as he passed away to his eternal resting place. Spurgeon was in Mentone at the time of his passing, and the body was taken back to London for burial. Susannah requested that Spurgeon pass through the waving of Palm branches. She felt this would be a proper procession for her husband. It is suspected that approximately 100,000 people passed by the coffin over a two-day period.[143] It was appropriate that the preacher who packed the crowds into the churches he preached in over the years paid tribute with their attendance one last time. The world said goodbye to one of the most charismatic and in depth pastors to ever live. It was fitting that at the top and the bottom of the casket there were inscriptions that read, In ever loving memory of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Born at Kelvedon, June 19, 1834; Fell asleep in Jesus at Mentone, January 31, 1892. '*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*'."[144] This thoroughly described Spurgeon's entire life. From the time he first preached at the age of 16 until his death at the age of 58, Spurgeon devoted his life to finishing his course and keeping his faith. These inscriptions summarized the devotion of the man who led the fight for truth in a day where truth was scarce.

Spurgeon's influence has yet to be exhausted. His influence will be felt by pastors for many more years to come. It is worth mentioning just a few. This is in no way an exhaustive list of his influences, due to the fact that his influence cannot be truly measured. The measure of his influences may only be seen in those who have devoted time to the study of the man and his ministry. These influences may be stronger in the 21st Century than even when Spurgeon was

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[143] Ross, 127.

[144] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II*, 505.

alive.

Firstly, the influence of Spurgeon's written work has had a tremendous impact on Christianity. Spurgeon has thousands of sermons that have been printed and preached over the years. He is one of the most quoted pastors due to his humor and in-depth writings. Spurgeon left his *Morning and Evening Devotions* for those who desire daily quiet time with God. Spurgeon also has a tremendous autobiography of his life, so that one may look into the thoughts of Spurgeon himself. There are also the copies of *The Sword And The Trowel*, which was Spurgeon's forum of meditations on the scriptures. These works continue to be published and have been recirculated many times. Spurgeon's writings are among the most influential works of any preacher because they appeal to almost every audience.

Spurgeon's influence may also be seen in the ministries and institutions that were started through his time at the Tabernacle. Spurgeon saw a need to train young men in the pastorate, so he started a College for young pastors, followed by the establishment of an orphanage. Another of the institutions was the Colportage Association which was a response to the growing influence of Catholicism in that day. The last of his institutions was the Society of Evangelists. This agency would be devoted for training men especially for the purpose of evangelism. [145] The influences of these institutions are innumerable. Spurgeon's legacy will be seen for all eternity due to the lives changed as a result of these institutions.

Spurgeon's family is certainly one of the greatest influences of his life. Susannah was baptized by her husband. When she became ill, she began to minister in other ways. Some of which were the writings that she did in the autobiography. Charles and Thomas, the twins, became pastors and spread his influence throughout their contacts and congregations. Spurgeon's

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[145] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume II*, 455.

family was important to him. He continued his influence in and through them after he passed away.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon will continue to influence society for the Kingdom of God through all eternity. The reality is that Spurgeon was not just a man who used his charisma to awe the crowds. The reason he was called "The Prince of All Preachers"[146] was that there was more to him than just being charismatic in his personality. More than his wit and unusual approach to preaching was his depth of knowledge. His study of God's Word was evident in his preaching of the truth. Spurgeon was devoted to his theology and conservative scholarship. Spurgeon was dedicated to winning souls for the Lord Jesus. The words that Spurgeon spoke as a boy preacher are the sum of his life: "The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all hell shake."[147] It was this heart a passion for preaching that propelled Spurgeon to the top of a list of preachers that makes him a more than adequate for study.

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[146] Larsen, 583

[147] Ibid., 582.

CHAPTER 3

Insights on Spurgeon's Preaching

As was previously stated by Michael Quicke, Spurgeon was given the designation of a *herald* style preacher. This classification by Quicke indicates that he was deductive while dramatic, general not specific, evangelistic not passive, and people-driven not program-driven. These statements can be affirmed from his time as a pastor.

Larsen comments that he was different from some of his predecessors of the puritan flare. He was not a typical expositor in the sense of some of the day like Alexander Maclaren. While even Maclaren would not be considered expository by the standards of some mentioned in chapter one, of the time period he was. According to Larsen, Spurgeon was not even considered textual-topical. Larsen comments, "Spurgeon rejected many conventionalities in preaching; he was humorous, dramatic, used catchy titles ("Turn or Burn" on Psalm 7:12), and employed sense appeal particularly in his marvelous illustrations. His voice was natural and easily reached six thousand hearers. His fresh style and forceful Anglo-Saxon discourse connected, and clearly Whitefield was his model."[148] Larsen continues by citing Craig Skinner in saying that he, "sees his fresh style, his uncommon clarity, his solid doctrine 'upon which people could base their lives,'[149] and his ability to bridge people's needs."[150] Spurgeon was concerned with marrying the gospel with the needs, but was not overly empathetic to the point of compromise. He exuded a straightforward approach, with humorous and sarcastic overtones. The majority of the people

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[148] Larsen, 585.

[149] Craig Skinner, "The Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19, no. 4 (October 1, 1984): 16-26. http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid= 16&hid=119&sid=e5102370-17c6-4111-9900-0b8f7d9d8d80 %40sessionmgr10 (accessed December 16, 2011).

[150] Larsen, 585.

responded well to this. There were as mentioned many critics though who compared him to the typical Victorian orator. Of course one could find no equal or comparison to Spurgeon's style. This gave the critic even more occasion to try to tarnish the young preachers influence.

John Pitts discusses the genius of Spurgeon's preaching citing things like voice clarity, his exuberant presentation, his love for the original languages, and his eloquence in using the King James Bible, and confidence in which he spoke.[151] Pitts notes that there was "always a refreshing note of certainty and assurance" in his message.[152] His message contained one central focus as Pitts notes by saying, "for him every road led to Christ."[153] Spurgeon was what has been called "Christo-centric" in his preaching. Part of his genius was that his topic or message always focused on Christ. This is part of the reason Spurgeon can be used as a case study for bridging the gap of text and culture, he kept his messages grounded in this fundamental topic.

In many ways, Spurgeon could be counted among those like the apostle Paul who did not concern themselves with the popular oratory of the latest trend in preaching. Their only concern was preaching with power and preaching the gospel. The Amplified Bible gives a clear rendering of what Paul was saying In 1 Corinthians 2 when he commented to the church about his ministry,

> As for myself, brethren, when I came to you, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony and evidence or mystery and secret of God [concerning what He has done through Christ for the salvation of men] in lofty words of eloquence or human philosophy and wisdom; For I resolved to know nothing (to be acquainted with nothing, and to be conscious of nothing) among you except Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and Him crucified. And I was in (passed into a state of) weakness and fear (dread) and great trembling [after I had come] among you. And my language and my message were not set forth in persuasive (enticing and plausible) words of wisdom, but they were in demonstration of

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151 John Pitts, "Genius of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Theology Today* 6, no. 4 (January 1, 1950): 524-530. *http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=13&hid=119&sid=e5102370-17c6-4111-9900-0b8f7d9d8d80%40sessionmgr10* (accessed February 28, 2012).

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

the [Holy] Spirit and power [a proof by the Spirit and power of God, operating on me and stirring in the minds of my hearers the most holy emotions thus persuading them], so that your faith might rest in the wisdom of men (human philosophy), but in the power of God.[154]

A comparison of these two men of God allows some similarities in approach and philosophy.

First, neither of them ever tried to be anything other than a herald of the gospel. They had no career ambitions or were not concerned about impressing anyone. Second, they did not rely on themselves and their natural abilities to proclaim the gospel; they relied solely on the power of the Holy Spirit. Third, they were not concerned with the normal methods or styles of their contemporaries. Their focus was on the subject matter, Jesus Christ. The fourth thing that can be compared is that they both preached liked the results depended on it, but trusted the power of their preaching and the results to God. They did not concern themselves with manipulative techniques in order to gain a harvest, they simply preached Jesus Christ crucified, and God provided the fruit. Last, they knew that if decisions were based on conventional wisdom and philosophy, the faith of the hearers would be limited to that and not inclined to God.

Not only here in 1 Corinthians but also and evaluation of Paul's sermon reveals some consistent likenesses between the two. In Acts 17 Luke records the following:

> So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said,' Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKOWOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ' For we also are His children.' Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the

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[154] I Cor. 2:1-5 (AMP).

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art and though of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because he has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.[155]

This would be a consistent message between Spurgeon and the Apostle Paul.

Spurgeon' time as a pastor/preacher was decorated with outstanding spoken and written accomplishments. None of which is any less important than his lectures to his students at the college. This series of lectures still serves as a valuable tool for young pastors as well as seasoned men of God. One might question the validity of such work while considering the vast contextual differences between modernistic Victorian England and the current postmodern climate. A close look at the principles will determine what principles cross time and cultural barriers.

Spurgeon's preaching theory began with an awareness of the culture. While at Waterbeach, Spurgeon gained a *heart* for a broken city and a *passion* to see it changed. His heart was broken over the sin he saw, much like that of Christ when He looked on the crowds and had compassion on them. From that compassion Spurgeon developed a heart for transformation: transformation for an entire community, one individual at a time.

In October 1851, Spurgeon preached at Waterbeach. One person recalled the outline of his message that day:

> SALVATION FROM SIN
> "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.*"
>   Matthew1:21
> The two parts of this Salvation are Justification and Sanctification.
> Justification, including pardon and imputation of righteousness.
> Pardon- fee, perfect, instantaneous, irreversible, bringing with it deliverance from the
>   consequences of sin, which are-
> God's displeasure.
> The curse of the law.

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[155] Acts 17:22-31 (NASB).

Incapacity for Heaven.
Liability, yea, certain destination to eternal punishment
Imputation of righteousness, causing a man to be regarded as holy, sinless, worthy of
     commendation and reward.
Its accompaniments are- God's love.
Blessing of the law.
Capacity for heaven.
A right and title, yea, certain possession of Heaven.
This Jesus effected. As to the first, by Hi sufferings and death; as to the second, by His
     holy obedience to the law.
Sanctification, including deliverance from sin, and positive holiness.
- Victory over- our natural depravity, the habits of sin, temptations, and backslidings.
- Working in us all Holy affections; Holy nature, Holy habits, Desires for holiness,
     Progress in diving grace.
Sanctification is unlike Justification, in that it is gradual, imperfect, progression, never
     consummated but in Heaven.
This is the work of Jesus-Showing us His examples and commands, by the Holy Spirit.
This is the beauteous salvation Jesus gives, complete deliverance from the guilt,
     consequences and effects of sin.[156]

During this time Spurgeon began to develop a methodology for preaching and ministry,

and Waterbeach proved to be the preparation for bigger things for him. The previous sermon

reveals some things about his direction in preaching. First one can clearly see the focus of the

message is salvation. Spurgeon once said during this time, "I would rather be the means of

saving a soul from death than be the greatest orator on earth."[157] This is evidenced in the title of

his message. His title was doctrinal in nature, not yet the catchy phrases or titles that will be

more consistent with Spurgeon later on.

Next he does not leave out any part of the salvation process nor does he avoid the use of

doctrinal language throughout the message. The message is filled with words like Justification

and Sanctification. Not only does Spurgeon use these words, but he explains them in great detail.

Other words that Spurgeon used in his sermon are imputation, depravity, righteousness, and

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[156] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 195-196.

[157] Ibid., 197.

pardon.

One other area that Spurgeon did not exclude for fear of offense was sin and its consequences. He asserts the consequences are what require God's *Justification*, Leading to *Sanctification*, resulting in *Holiness*. This offering for salvation was the springboard for Spurgeon's writings and preaching. He would meet people where they were at. There were multiple occasions where he visited those who were void of Christ. In many cases, he addressed the social ills of the community. Spurgeon sought to remove the behaviors that would degrade society, social ills such as getting drunk, swearing, and abusing one's family.

One can also see the use of Apologetics in his methods of preaching and reaching people. He dealt with a group of heretics called *Antinomians*. They are people who hold that because they believed themselves to be elect, they could live however they wished.[158]Spurgeon took an Apologetic approach to addressing the issues such as this. On one occasion from the pulpit a man accused Spurgeon of being a "rank Arminian." This was entirely untrue, as Spurgeon considered himself to be more akin to Calvinists than to any other group of believers. The man anyway insisted that Spurgeon held Arminian beliefs. He referenced the Word of God in citing that one who is truly sanctified will have a hatred for sin.

Even in the early years beginning at Waterbeach Spurgeon was accustomed to using the pulpit as a way of communicating truth. Early in his ministry, Spurgeon was being awakened to the need for discipleship. A man that had been known for his social sins entered the church. The man began to display some evidences of change, however after a period of time he fell back into a state of recognizable sin. The people scorned him as a hypocrite. Spurgeon recognized the genuine struggle that sometimes comes from within the church, which comes in the form of

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[158] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 224.

expectations that a congregation places on newly converted people. It is for certain that Spurgeon was making mental notes of these challenges.

This awareness would continue with Spurgeon as he entered the pulpit at New Park Street on December 18, 1853 until his death while serving The Metropolitan Tabernacle. The condition of the church reflected that of London during this time period. The church was cold and dark and that was the condition of London at this time. The church was describes as "lacking in unction and power."[159] His passion in preaching was formed from a desire to confront the heresies of modernism.

While combating modernism, he also fought the preconceived ideas about preaching in the Victorian era. The Victorian era of preaching was characterized by eloquent and oratorical performance. The churches were more like places that encouraged social interaction rather than life change. The eloquence of the pulpits was not producing the Spirit-filled results that would make a difference in society. London was filled with alcohol abuse and obscenities that could be described of many other periods of time throughout the history. This condition of apathy within the church was not just common with New Park Street; it was a condition that was common throughout London society. Ian Murray quotes Minister John Angell James as, "The state of religion in our country is low. I do not think I ever preached with less saving results since I was a minister; and this is the case with most others, It is a general complaint."[160]

Spurgeon's displayed his knowledge, wit and wisdom at the invitation to come to the New Park Street Church. It was initiated by Deacon Thomas Olney after Spurgeon was challenged at the Sunday School Union Annual meeting by another preacher in regards to his

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[159] Murray, 21.

[160] Ibid., 23.

youth. The older preacher cited a passage of scripture stating "it is a pity that that boys did not adopt the Scriptural practice of tarrying at Jericho till their beards were grown before they tried to instruct their seniors." Spurgeon's reply to this man was that he had misused the scripture and that the passage meant, "those who were bidden to tarry at Jericho were not boys, but full grown men, whose beards had been shaved off by their enemies as the greatest indignity they could be made to suffer, and who were therefore, ashamed to return home until their beards had grown again."[161] One of the men that heard him defend himself that night suggested to Olney that the church try to acquire Spurgeon to fill their pulpit; little did either one realize was about to take place in history of the church.

Spurgeon received the invitation and made arrangements to honor the request. Spurgeon became the pastor in 1854 following men such as John Gill and John Rippon. Though these men were held in high regard, the church had declined in its attendance, and even Spurgeon recalled that the attendance was low when he first arrived. This would soon change after the tenure of his preaching and ministry. His preaching methodology took form during these early years, but his method never overcame his message.

An article by Craig Skinner gives a summary of Spurgeon's preaching philosophy in which he suggests that the first distinction was the quantity of his productions. Spurgeon amassed volumes of sermons and writings, and no doubt some have probably been lost in transition. He was known for his printed sermons as well as the publication of The Sword and the Trowel. Each week, sermons were sold at a penny each. His influence was spread far and wide due to the amount of works done.

Second, Spurgeon was known for the quality of his content. As has already been

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[161] Spurgeon, Au*tobiography, Volume I*, 245.

mentioned in *Lectures to My Students*, Spurgeon believed in giving content that matters. His content was doctrinal in nature, with Calvinistic overtones. His mention of Grace is seen throughout many of his sermons and writings.

Third, Spurgeon had a wide variety of subjects that he covered. He believed in covering the entire span of the globe when it came to scripture. His massive volumes of sermons display a summary of the entire Bible and its contents. Spurgeon never slacked on preaching the whole counsel of God.

Not only did Spurgeon cover a massive variety of texts, but he managed to keep his sermons simple. He kept them simple so that the newborn Christian or the not yet born again could understand them. He talked often about the substitutionary atonement of Christ- the potential for conversion from the Grace of God. Spurgeon's goal was to make so the simplest of learning would take place and conversion would be the result.

Next one could say that he displayed humility in his approach to preaching. Spurgeon never allowed his title to change from Mr. to Reverend. He refused ordination in the sense of his pastoring. When he was called to New Park Street, he refused a six month probationary period, explaining that the church would know in three months if he were the person to be called. Spurgeon was well acclaimed, but it was not of his own seeking that it found him.

Spurgeon's Thoughts on Sermons

One of the areas that are not given a detailed instruction in the Lectures series is his detailed view on Homiletics. Spurgeon, however, did comment on this with some of his pastor friends in a Friday afternoon meeting. Spurgeon's own recollection of his sermon preparation was as follows:

Brethren, it is not easy for me to tell you precisely how I make my sermons. All through the week I am on the lookout for material that I can use on the Sabbath; but the actual work of

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arranging it , is necessarily , left until Saturday evening, for every other moment is fully occupied in the Lord's service. I have often said that my greatest difficulty is to fix my mind upon the particular texts which are to be the subjects of discourse on the following day; or , to speak more correctly, to know what topics the Holy Spirit would have me bring before the congregation. As soon as any passage of scripture really grips my heart and soul, I concentrate my whole attention upon it, look at the precise meaning of the original, closely examine the contexts as to see the special aspect of the text in the surroundings, and roughly jot down all the thoughts that occur to me concerning the subject, leaving to a later period the orderly marshaling of them for presentation to my hearers. When I have reached this point, I am often stopped by an obstacle which is only a trouble o those of us whose sermons are regularly printed. I turn to my own Bible, which contains a complete record of all my published discourses; and, looking at those I have preached upon the text, I find, perhaps, that the general run of thought is so similar to that which I have marked out, that I have to abandon the subject, and seek another. Happily, a text of scripture is like a diamond with many facets, which sparkles and flashes whichever way it is held, so that, although, I may have, already printed several sermons upon a particular passage, there is still a fresh setting possible for the priceless gem, and I can go forward with my work. I like next to see what others have to say about my text; and, as a rule, my experience is that, if its teaching is perfectly plain, the commentator's, to a man, explain it at great length, whereas, with equal unanimity, they studiously avoid or evade the verses which Peter might have described as 'things hard to be understood' I am very much obliged to them for leaving me so many nuts to crack; but I should have been just as grateful if they had more use of their own theological teeth or nutcrackers. However among the many who have written upon the Word I generally find some who can at least help to throw a side light upon it; and when I have arrived at that part of my preparation, I am glad to call my dear wife to my assistance. She reads to me until I get a clear idea of the whole subject; and gradually, I am guided to the bet form of outline, which I copy out, on a half sheet of notepaper, for use in the pulpit. This relates only to the morning sermon; for the evening, I am usually content if I can decide upon the text, and have a general notion of the lessons to be drawn from it, leaving to the Lord's Day afternoon the final arrangement of divisions, sub-divisions, and illustrations.[162]

This in his own admission is the process by which he designs his sermons and prepares for them.

Must of this is driven by a balance for relational ministry as well as educational ministry.

It will be helpful to make some observations here about Spurgeon to give an idea of how he approached Homiletics. First Spurgeon was self-taught, so it would make sense that he had his own system of sermon preparation. The first is evidenced in his massive library and his insatiable desire to read. As it has already been said, Spurgeon would read for hours at a time. His library is believed to have had approximately 12,000 books at one point. He read the puritan

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[162] Charles H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: His Diary, Letters, and Records*. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1992), 65-66.

preachers in large quantity. He suggests many commentaries of his day and time in the last section of the lectures. Spurgeon taught himself enough of the languages to be able to comment on them and use them in his sermons if necessary.

Spurgeon believed in Spiritualizing, or drawing implications from the text that may not be specifically mentioned in the text. While this was not his overarching emphasis in sermon preparation, he did use this and Allegorical methods of sermonizing in moderation. This is not overly abundant in all his messages. This is not a preferred method of homiletics and even Spurgeon was criticized by some of his contemporaries for applying allegorical interpretation.

The first series of lectures deal with his call into ministry and the prayer life of the pastor. While these items are critical in nature, it serves best here to say that Spurgeon was devoted to answering his calling with absolute surety and to encourage the young pastors to do this as well. He went as far to say, "An ambassador unsent would be a laughing stock."[163] While displaying some of the sarcasm that he was criticized for, he certainly believed that a man who is not called by God would produce no fruit in preaching.

He also touches on the prayer life of the young pastor. Spurgeon believed and exemplified that "the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer."[164] He would continue in that address to say that sermon preparation requires prayer and meditation in order to be fulfilling. Not only does it help in preparation, but it helps in delivery. Not undermining the importance of these two essentials, they are assumed at this point.

The next significant section and the first that will be covered in depth was the section called *Sermon's Their Matter*. Spurgeon was adamant that sermons should contain real teaching

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[163] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, Ann. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2008), 21.

[164] Ibid, 42.

and instruction. The following statement makes the point:

> To divide a sermon well may be a very useful art, but how if there is nothing to divide? A mere division maker is like an excellent carver with an empty dish before him. To be able to deliver an exordium which shall be appropriate and attractive, to be at ease in speaking with propriety during the time allotted for the discourse, and to wind up with a respectable peoration, may appear to mere religious performers to be all that is requisite; but the true minister of Christ knows that the true value of a sermon must lie, not in its fashion and manner, but in the truth which it contains. Nothing can compensate for the absence of teaching; all the rhetoric in the world is but as chaff to the wheat in contrast to the gospel of our salvation.[165]

As has already been discussed, Spurgeon was self-taught. This is a monumental task, but he was dedicated to knowledge that could be passed on. It has been said on the days that he spent reading; he would sometimes read for eight or so hours in one setting.

Spurgeon also was convinced that every preacher should be a theologian. Spurgeon once again used his sarcasm by saying, "Brethren, if you are not theologians, you are in your pastorates just nothing at all."[166] He felt that preaching without theological content was ultimately a waste of time for the preacher and the hearer.

When considering the term *theology*, one must recognize that the word simply refers to the various areas of concentration in the study of God. When the terms systematic are involved, it is the study of these various individual systems and how they relate to God. John Frame words it this way:

> Systematic theology is topical theology. It studies the Bible not by going from Genesis to Revelation but by exploring topics treated in various parts of Scripture, like the topics of God, man, revelation, Christ, the last days. Theologians have sometimes called these topics *loci*, the Latin plural of *locus* ("place"). So, systematic theology asks "whole Bible" questions: What does the whole Bible teach about God? About sin? About justification by faith?[167]

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[165] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 76.

[166] Ibid, 79.

[167] John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, (Phillipsburg, NJ:

This was the content that Spurgeon believed should be in each message.

Early in his ministry, Spurgeon kept to this philosophy of preaching content rich messages. The titles of many of his messages were give an indication what the content of the message was about. Volume 1 of The New Park Street sermon series, which consists of 53 sermons, gives an idea of what the messages were about. Spurgeon preached sermons on theological themes such as, *The Immutability of God, The Sin of Unbelief, The Personality of The Holy Ghost, Christ Crucified, the Kingly Priesthood of The Saints, The Victory of Faith, Forgiveness, The Church of Christ, The Power of The Holy Ghost, The Necessity of Increased Faith, Law and Grace, Heaven and Hell, Election, The Death of the Christian, Repentance Unto Life, Conversion, The God of Peace, and Free-Will*. These are only a few out of the first two volumes. So out of 53 messages, the overwhelming majority had theologically based titles. These messages were from the year 1855 which means that Spurgeon was only 21 to 22 years old at the time of these messages. A close look at the message titled *The Immutability of God* will reveal that not only the topic is rich, but the content is rich as well:

> Point number 2 of the sermon is, "He changes not his attributes. Whatever the attributes of God were old, that they are now; and each of them we may sing," As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." Was he powerful? Was he the mighty God when he spake the world out of the womb of non-existence? Was he the omnipotent when he piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, he was powerful then, and his arm is unpalsied now; he is the same giant in his might; the sap of his nourishment is undried, and the strength of his souls stands the same forever.[168]

It is obvious that content was not lacking in the messages of this young man. His content was one of the contributing factors to him being one of the most distinctive preachers of all time.

P&R Publishing, 2006), 3.

[168] Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit.* 6 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 2.

Spurgeon's message entitled *Conversion* is another example of the content of his messages and also the need for preaching. This excerpt will show the visible evidence of his desire for content: "But after all, preaching is the ordained means for the salvation of sinners, and by this ten times as many are brought to the savior as by any other. Ah! My friends, to have been the means of saving souls from death by preaching-what an honor."[169] He continues in this message to say, "Oh, brethren, if ye turn a sinner from the error of his ways, remember ye have saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins."[170] Spurgeon alludes to the responsibility of preaching in the conversion of men and women, but also in the same point addresses the very idea of conversion which is turning one from their sins that will be no more held to their charge.

Content is not always as some would consider it. He states that the sermon is to be congruous to the text, which means that it is to be based off the text. The best way to remain congruous with the text is to focus on the Spirit. Spurgeon found great pleasure in taking content and presenting in a way that everyone could understand. Spurgeon continued to say that they are to be weighty and full of matter. This should not be confused with eloquence or oratorical performance. The preacher should stick with the text and not vary from it. He concludes this by saying that preaching is not the place for individual thoughts and opinions.

Spurgeon believed the value of preaching doctrinally could not be compensated by any other topic of preaching. He paraphrases a passage of scripture by saying, "Build not with wood, hay, and stubble, but with gold, silver, and precious stones." [171] He adds later in his lecture:

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[169] Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 344.

[170] Ibid., 345.

[171] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 80.

> It is infamous to ascend your pulpit and pour over your people rivers of language, cataracts of words, in which mere platitudes are held in solution like infinitesimal grains of homeopathic medicine in an Atlantic of utterance. Better far give the people masses of unprepared truth in the rough, like pieces of meat from a butcher's block, chopped off anyhow, bone and al, and even dropped down in the sawdust, than ostentatiously and delicately hand them out upon a china dish as a delicious slice of nothing at all, decorated with the parsley of poetry, and flavoured with the sauce of affectation.[172]

Showing his innate ability to illustrate a point with satire and sarcasm reveals his passion for preaching that is drowned in doctrine. One can interpret this by saying that a pastor who fails to expound the doctrinal to his congregation will be giving them an unsatisfying message, which ultimately returns illiteracy of the scriptures. This is a travesty according to Spurgeon.

These doctrines, according to Spurgeon, must be centered directly on the gospel. Those doctrines that are not essential to salvation are not to be taught at every worship occasion, but those that are essential are to be taught and preached at every meeting. With this in mind, he also tells his students that they must keep their subjects fresh. In other words they were not to take one matter of doctrine and preach on it at every opportunity. The variety of teaching on these doctrines keep the people engaged in the truth.

Along with this variety, he suggests a balance of addressing the social aspect of society in making personal application. Spurgeon warned his students against filling one sermon with too much material, so as to not allow time for digestion. His comments are, "We must in these times say a great deal in a few words, but not too much, amplification. One though fixed on the mind will be better than fifty thoughts made to flit across the ear. One ten penny nail driven home and clenched will be more useful than a score of tin-tacks loosely fixe, to be pulled out again in an

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[172] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 81.

hour."[173] This concept is also employed by many contemporary preachers. Andy Stanley in his book *Communicating for Change* focuses on the need to give one central thought in preaching a sermon.[174] While Stanley says that if there are three points then there is a three week series, Spurgeon's messages most commonly had three points, yet the focus remained on a single theme. A good example of this is in his message on Romans 8:17:

> "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

> I.   THE GROUND OF HEIRSHIP.
> II.   THE UNIVERSALITY OF HEIRSHIP
> III.   THE INHERITANCE WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF HEIRSHIP
> IV.   THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE CLAIMANTS TO HEIRSHIP[175]

Here one can see a typical point outline, but the theme is congruous throughout the outline.

He concludes his section here by saying that a sermon needs to be well arranged and clear in communication. Most of his sermons could be reduced to a simple outline form. Spurgeon would only use a few notes from the pulpit, and would later revise the outline to a literary form. The outline kept him well organized, but it also allowed him to formulate clear thoughts to be communicated. He further instructs that the doctrines should be clear and identifiable in the sermon. Just as the previous sermon on heir-ship demonstrates, it is clear throughout them message that this is the main theme of the text.

The subject of the sermon was to be presented with passion and energy. This was one of Surgeon's traits. There was never a life-less presentation of the gospel. Spurgeon's heart is communicated in the following:

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[173] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 85.

[174] Andy Stanley, *Communicating for Change* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2006).

[175] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermon Notes* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 550-551.

> Of all I would say this is the sum; my brethren, PREACH CHRIST, always and evermore. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all comprehending theme. The world needs to be told of its Savior, and of the way to reach him. Justification by faith should be far more than it is the daily testimony of Protestant pulpits; and if with this master-truth there should be more generally associated the other great doctrines of grace, the better for our churches and our age.[176]

As Spurgeon wanted, this emphasis has been placed on many generations through his writings and the influence he had on the young preachers.

The next section that is worth mentioning for the purpose of evaluation is referred to as *Attention* in *Lectures to My Students*. Here he is referring to the ability of the preacher to keep and maintain the concentration of the congregation. He comments that from the young to the old, it is important to keep them engaged; "their attention must be gained, or nothing can be done with them: and it must be retained, or we may go on word-spinning, but no good will come of it."[177] Part of this is done with eye contact, especially with the younger children.

Another one of the concerns was that people were not accustomed to paying attention. They would look around as people walked in and were not the least bit attentive to the message. Spurgeon had an unusual or peculiar way of dealing with this: "Now friends, as it is so very interesting to you to know who comes in, and it disturbs me so very much for you to look round, if you like, I will describe each one as he comes in, so that you may sit and look at me, and keep up at least a show of decency."[178] A statement like this could easily get one the title of mad-man in the world of preaching, but it shows the candor that Spurgeon used. What was for certain is that this kind of forthrightness help keep people in tuned, but also made for publicity among the

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[176] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 87.

[177] Ibid., 146.

[178] Ibid., 150.

London crowd.

Spurgeon in the previous section dealt with the need to provide content. Content is one of the ways to keep people engaged. He referred to it as, "The First Golden Rule Is, Always Say Something worth Hearing."[179] He says to give them something they will want to remember and "treasure" beyond the time spent in service; of course for Spurgeon on doctrine and theology. He insists that this will gain the interest of the listener.

Spurgeon also employed what he called "Surprise Power."[180] This he said was to give the listener the unexpected, by saying something different than what has been said before. Pauses were a good way of doing this according to Spurgeon. He also would utilize prayer or draw attention to people sleeping during the service. He took it personally if people slept during the sermon, but if they were asleep before, he considered it their responsibility. Once again being very candid from the platform, he would not hesitate to comment on it during his sermon.

Another way of keeping their attention was to emphasize the importance of the message to the listener. The listener needs to understand that the message was beneficial for them. Once a person knew that they would gain something from the message, they would be more likely to focus on it and retain it.

He also suggested areas like the right climate or environment the message is preached in, so as to not be a distraction. He mentions not repeating oneself and bringing new thoughts and ideas to the message and when they cease to exist so does the sermon. Spurgeon lived what he preached in regard to each of these areas. He certainly was not void of gaining attention; whether it was through the maintenance of the church or the sudden outburst to regain attention.

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[179] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 150.

[180] Ibid., 158.

The next section worthy of consideration for a young preacher is *The Need of Decision for the Truth*. He calls for total unwavering confidence in the truth. He exclaims that anything gained as truth cannot be challenged with an opposing view. He said that truth and lies cannot coexist together.[181] Spurgeon comments on the authority of the Bible,

> We believe that everything stated in the book that comes to us from God is to be accepted by us as his sure testimony, and nothing less than that. God forbid we should be ensnared by those various interpretations of the modus of inspiration, which amount to little more frittering it away. The book is a divine production; it is perfect, and it is the last court of appeal- the judge which ends the strife. I would as soon dream of blaspheming my Maker as of the infallibility of his word.[182]

Spurgeon would not consider any standard by which to live other than that of the Bible. A compromise here would lead to the continued separation of men from God. He assures the men of the college of the importance of truth and the salvation of souls.

Spurgeon says that one's speech and sincerity will display their confidence in the gospel. He suggests that those who passionately and convincingly preach these truths will bring confidence to the listener. He likens it to a witness in the courtroom and the sincerity that is evidenced by their actions. [183] There was no question that Spurgeon exuded the confidence he had in the gospel. Some mistook this for arrogance, but many were converted under the assured impression he gave of the gospel.

The need for such confidence in his messages resulted from the lack of assurance in religious matters during the 19th Century. He compared this to the lack of assurance experienced by people throughout history, even dating back to the earliest recorded history of Israel. The Old

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[181] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 264.

[182] Ibid., 266.

[183] Ibid., 271.

Testament is replete with examples, such as the miracle at the Red Sea, in which people had no confidence in their God. Spurgeon recognized this trend of doubt throughout history, and he responded by interjecting truth in order for people to receive God's Special Revelation. The preaching of God's Word would be the ultimate source of truth that cannot be equaled by any other resource.

The next section that was also a trademark of Spurgeon is the section on *Posture, Action, and Gesture.* Spurgeon was known for his fist raising, handkerchief waiving, and thundering comments. All of this was inconsistent with Victorian oratory. Spurgeon used body language as a means of stressing points and gaining the attention of others.

He suggests that a speaker must consider his awkwardness in posture and strive to avoid clumsiness. Another vice of the failed body language is a loss of confidence in message and calling. This sends a mixed message to the listener. He attributes some of the awkwardness to the pulpit itself. Spurgeon makes it clear the pulpits are barriers to the preacher; "What horrible inventions they are! If we could once abolish them we might say concerning them as Joshua did concerning Jericho- Cursed be he that buildeth this Jericho , for the old fashioned pulpit has been a greater curse to the churches than is at first evident."[184] Once again being true to his personality, he does not mix words. He questioned the ability of those orators who read their sermons and remained fixed to the pulpits.

The aim for Spurgeon in a commenting on posture can be reduced two a couple of reasons, the first of which concerns the preacher. The preacher is to be comfortable and able to present his message with clarity and confidence. The other reason is for the benefit of the listener and it is so they can receive with clarity the message that has been presented. He explains, "The

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[184] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 329.

whole business of delivery should be one; everything should harmonize the thought, the spirit, the language, the tone, and the action should be of all a piece, and the whole should be, not for the winning of honour to ourselves, but for the glory of God and too good of men; if it be so there is no fear of you violating the rule as to being natural, for it will not occur to you otherwise."[185] If one breaks down this comment like a definition for the presentation, the means is the process of being fluid in posture, action, and gesture so that the presentation of the message will be clear and understandable. The ends that is trying to be accomplished by this means is that God be glorified not man praised for his fine oratory. That is the essence of this section and statement.

Another area of great importance to Spurgeon that is given as much space in his *Lectures to his Students* is the space given to *Illustrations*. Spurgeon was the master illustrator. Spurgeon likens an illustration to that of a window in that it allows light to pass through and make objects inside the window more visible. The points of a sermon to be made more clear. Clarification can be made through the use of *parables, similes*, and *metaphors*.[186] The use of illustration makes the sermon come alive. It keeps the attention of the reader as well as providing a clear picture of the doctrine that is being discussed or the passage that is being expounded. Although Spurgeon believed in the use of the illustration through anecdotes, parables, stories, simile, and metaphor, he also believed in a proper balance. He suggested that illustrations can be over used and overpower the point.

Spurgeon used things that were *common to the people* of 19th Century England to *illustrate*. He also described in great detail things of nature that people could associate with.

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[185] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 368.

[186] Ibid., 433.

Nature was God's handy work to Spurgeon and felt that God's evidence was all around it. He was very descriptive, taking time to mention the more intricate details of what he was describing. He would go great links to explain every detail of a story or parable. This can be seen in his sermons. In his sermon, "Two Guards, Watching and Praying" from Nehemiah 4:9, he states,

> Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. Spurgeon illustrates his first point by saying," First, then, dear friends, think of the First Guard; 'We made our prayer unto God'; Oh the more definiteness in prayer! I am afraid our prayers are often clouds, and we get mists for answers. Nehemiah's prayer meant business. I wish we could always pray in this way. When I pray, I like to go to God just as I go to a banker, when I have a cheque to be cashed. I walk in, put the cheque down, on the counter, the clerk gives me money, I take it up, and go about my business. I do not know that I ever stopped in a bank five minutes to talk with the clerks; when I have received my change, I go away and attend to other matters. [187]

First here he uses an ordinary common occurrence for his illustration. He describes an encounter in the bank, which was something everyone could associate with in his congregation. Second he relates the process of cashing the check to having prayers answered or heard by God. Third he uses nature at the beginning of the illustration to compare the answers to clouds and the mists of the air. These were common associations for Spurgeon's sermons.

Spurgeon was a *man of deep conviction and integrity*. He would not rest until his name was cleared from the *Down Grade Controversy*. His objectives were pure in motive, and honoring of God. When the question arose from the Baptist Union over the integrity of scripture, Spurgeon held to his convictions. During the process of removing himself from the Union, his integrity was questioned, and this is when Spurgeon worked diligently to clear his name from falsehoods being told about the process of removal.

Another area that helps identify Spurgeon's philosophy according to Skinner was his

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[187] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. 1892. Reprint (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991).

awareness of the social issues of the time. Spurgeon was inclined to address the domestic problems of 19th Century England. He invested time, money, and resources in the orphanage. He understood the abuse of society on these children. He was also aware of the misuse of alcohol in the areas of England where he ministered.

The eighth area of philosophy is the *authority of his perspectives*. Spurgeon, as has been mentioned in previous paragraphs believed every preacher should be a theologian. He felt that was the great need in preaching was to stand on the basis and authority of the doctrines he held to. Primarily Spurgeon was Calvinistic in his theology, but at times referred to himself as a "poor Calvinist." Spurgeon was so confident in his theology; he never wavered from it, and preached it until he died.

The ninth area of philosophy was his *Dexterity* in his presentation. Spurgeon at times would appear more exegetical, and at others appear more topical. His view on spiritualizing a text gained much critique, but when he entered the pulpit, one could be sure the message would be powerful and Spirit filled. His presentation was second to none, and he connected with his audience through confidence and knowledge. Although he was not powerful according to Victorian style preaching, his Puritan influence was evident and it was an immolation of the Puritan tradition.

Lastly was Spurgeon's *stability of his doctrine*. He provided a well-balanced meal for his congregation between practical and doctrinal. It was not the ideas themselves that were fulfilling, but the content of those ideas. Skinner cites and acronym that more rigidly described Spurgeon's position on matters of doctrine:

- R- regenerated by His Spirit
- O- obedient to God's initiative
- S- secured through the atonement
- E- established through faith

- S- saved by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-10) [188]

Spurgeon's Influence on Preaching

Although over 100 years have elapsed since Spurgeon preached, the church of the post-modern mindset shares many similarities. Current observations of the evangelical church show declines in many congregations. While there are a few congregations that are growing, the overall climate of the established church is bleak. The churches that appear to be growing are those that have been recently planted or who had had significant changes in direction. The majority of the churches are struggling to maintain attendance, without any signs of real conversion growth. For signs of this, one can refer back to Barna's findings about the influence of the church on culture and society.

Spurgeon found himself in the same kind of environment. He was a 22 year old preacher that had already garnered the criticism of his senior colleagues, and this would be the beginning of a challenge that will haunt him the rest of his life and ministry. Spurgeon's life and ministry certainly left its mark on history, but it came with a price.

Spurgeon was equipped with a passion for revival during these years. Spurgeon commented on those days of revival while referring to them as prayer meetings. His dedication to the movement of the Spirit is evident in the following statement,

> Shall we ever forget Park Street, these prayer meetings, when I felt compelled to let you go without a word from my lips, because the Spirit of God was so awfully present that we felt bowed to the dust. And what listening there was at Park Street, where we scarcely had air enough to breathe! The Holy Spirit came down like showers which saturate the soil till the clods are ready for the breaking; and then it was not long before we heard on the right and on the left the cry, "What must we do to be saved?"[189]

Spurgeon was dedicated to the movement of God and was consistent with his willingness to wait

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[188] Skinner, 24.

[189] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 328.

on it. This was a period that resulted in a great number of conversions for Spurgeon and the people of New Park Street.

Ironically, some of the conversions that were experienced during this time were people that came to hear Spurgeon as a result of some of the criticisms he received from those in the community. Some who attended would be changed for life and return different from how they came. Men returned home to their wives different men. People were apologizing to Spurgeon for being involved in the slanderous talk within the London community. Spurgeon's perceived crazy antics and anti-Victorian preaching proved to be one of his most successful evangelistic tools.

Another of the tools that aided Spurgeon was the move from the Church to Exeter Hall. The move was publicized locally and this drew the attention of the people in the city. The curiosity of what was taking place there also proved to be an effective evangelistic tool. Once the people came it was the preaching of the young Spurgeon that captivated them. Early on as it has been established from the titles of his sermons, he preached doctrinal messages. He preached what has been defined in earlier paragraphs as biblical messages.

In addressing the cultural taboos of the day, Spurgeon took doctrine and applied it to the many social ills. He would also adopt illustrations and anecdotes that resonated with 19th century England. Spurgeon would not shy away from confronting the behavior of the people in the church as well as those whom he would meet on the streets. Whether on the streets or at the church to confront the unconventional preacher, Spurgeon would take advantage of every opportunity to share his love for the Word of God.

Spurgeon did not necessarily consider that he was an evangelist by title, but it was in taking advantage of the opportunities as they presented themselves to him. His strength was in his passion and desire to communicate the truths he found in the scriptures. These truths were

culminated for Spurgeon in those he read so much of such as certainly was not an extremist on

this matter; he was well balanced in his understanding of the doctrines referred to in the TULIP

acronym.

Upon hearing Spurgeon during these years, a minister from Glasgow named John

Anderson visited New Park Street church on March 30, 1856, after hearing much about

Spurgeon and reading one of his sermons. His impression of Spurgeon's preaching was as

follows:

> Mr. Spurgeon is equally great in the tender and the terrible. Nor is he without humour. Here many will refuse him their sympathy, and think him censurable. I scarcely think he is. Others will think, and do think, differently. His taste, according to others, is bad. It is, I admit, often so. But, then, think of the immaturity of his years. I was told he was conceited. I saw no proofs of it; and if I had, was I on that account to think less of his sermons? I am far from thinking Mr. Spurgeon perfect. In this respect he is not like a Whitefield, who from the first, was as perfect an orator as he was in the last. In respect of his power over an audience, and a London one in particular, I should say he is not inferior to Whitefield himself. Mr. Spurgeon is a Calvinist, which few of the dissenting ministers in London now are. He preaches salvation, not of man's free will, but of the Lord's good will, which few in London, it is to be feared no do. On all these accounts, we hail the appearance of Mr. Spurgeon with no ordinary delight, and anticipate for him a career of no ordinary usefulness.[190]

It is obvious that even Spurgeon made strong impressions on the ministers.

Anderson provided a fair but revealing statement about Spurgeon's preaching as a young

minister at the church. Spurgeon was not eloquent in the sense of oratory, but he connected well

to his congregation. His connections were made through the use of natural language and the use

of illustrations that people understood. His commitment to doctrinal subjects never wavered even

when it was not popular among the religious elite in London. Anderson was well impressed that

Spurgeon would make a huge contribution to the church and the Kingdom, and it seems that

Anderson had great insight for the career of the young preaching wonder.

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[190] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 339.

As Anderson suspected Spurgeon's ministry began to grow rapidly. His popularity grew so much that many feared that Whitefield and Wesley would soon fade in popularity compared to Spurgeon. As previously mentioned, Spurgeon took full advantage of this popularity, especially in regard to the press and the media. Spurgeon understood the fickle nature of the press, as reporters would both praise and curse him. In response to this awareness Spurgeon said in a letter to a friend, "Well the press has kicked me long enough, now they are beginning to lick me; but one is as good as the other so long as it helps to fill our place of worship."[191] This is not the typical strategy for evangelism considering this was during the Victorian period in England.

At a time when the church is less theologically literate, one must be willing to stand by the doctrines that formulate their faith. Not only are these doctrines to be taught with fervency and passion, they must be applied to the cultural surroundings. It has been said that 50% of the sermon is to be exposition while the other 50% is to application. Spurgeon provided a balanced approach to preaching the doctrines of his faith while associating it with the needed social reform in Victorian England. This reform would eventually find its way into the church for Spurgeon during *The Downgrade Controversy*.

Spurgeon never stopped communicating the important doctrines of his faith. His denomination was Baptist in nature, and by his own admission, he considered himself a Calvinist. While for Spurgeon it was the doctrinal system that carried Calvin's name, the implication is that one remains true to the word.

Not only did Spurgeon remain true to doctrine, he seized every moment for evangelism. Many preachers look at controversy or ridicule as a hindrance. Spurgeon, however, welcomed the attention. While he drew both good and bad publicity, he capitalized on those who visited

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[191] Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume I*, 341.

him out of curiosity. In today's culture people are not necessarily looking for a church to go to on Sunday morning. Publicity needs to be taken advantage of whether it is positive or negative.

Considering the homiletics and style of the "Prince of Preachers," Spurgeon has left his mark on preaching in three areas. The first is that of his *live preaching to congregations*. It should go without saying that anyone who could fill the Metropolitan Tabernacle twice on Sundays for 30 years.[192] His popularity grew and the fruit of his ministry can be seen in the conversions that were recorded. Spurgeon was not the typical Victorian preacher, and this stunned his audiences and drew much acclaim.

The second area where Spurgeon left his mark on preaching can be seen in *his published sermons*.[193] His sermons continue to be circulated and there are multiple volumes of his works. Spurgeon is the most recognized published preacher to date in history. The sermons began with the one recorded in chapter two when he preached at Waterbeach and they continued to be published long after his death in 1892. The fact that these sermons and devotions are still a legitimate source of publication in the 21st Century gives some evidence as to the content of his writings even though they are written in 19th Century Victorian English. The depth and content of these messages makes them well worth considering for spiritual nourishment.

The third area where he left his mark on preaching is in his *lectures on preaching and homiletics*.[194] Spurgeon's published work *Lectures To My Students* reveals the heart of the master homiletician. While Spurgeon was not formally educated himself, he committed himself to training young ministers in homiletics, and many of his lectures provide relevant implications

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[192] O.C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 456.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid., 457.

for any period in history.

While it is certain that Spurgeon was influential in all these areas of ministry, it can hardly be challenged that at the heart of Spurgeon was the live preaching. Spurgeon himself once said, "The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all hell shake. I must and I will make men listen. The revealed Word awakened me; but it was the preached Word that saved me."[195] Spurgeon so believed in preaching that he had preached 1,000 sermons by the time he was 21, an astonishing accomplishment that indicates the passion behind the young preacher. [196]

Motivation and passion in one's preaching is one element that must be considered; *A person must be called* in order to exhibit this kind of passion and motivation. Paul writes about the importance of being called to preach in Romans 10 where he says in verses 14-15, "But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news'?" The thrust of this passage lies in the fact that *the message of salvation is to be provided to all* but the series of questions that leads up to the statement are built up by the necessity of a messenger. The word that is transliterated from the Greek is *apostello* which means *to order to go to a place*, which in this instance is referring to the preaching of those sent by God.

It is critical in this age of reason that the preachers affirm their calling to vocational ministry. There is not a more taxing occupation in history than that of the preacher. The evidence

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[195] Larsen, 582-583.

[196] Ibid., 583.

can be found in the number of persecutions and martyrs that have been recorded in history and are currently still taking place, primarily in countries outside the United States. A person can withstand those persecutions however if they are confident in their call. Spurgeon struggled with depression and other emotional challenges, but his passion and calling drove him past those to the pulpit so that people would hear the message of the Grace of God. Spurgeon said, "I would preach standing on my head if I thought I could convert souls."[197]

Another consideration that needs to be made from observing his preaching was *his style* or *pattern of preaching*. For Spurgeon it all began in the library. One thing for certain that can be said of him was that he was an avid reader. While he did not have formal seminary training, he was trained by the great Puritan preachers and their writings. Some estimates say that Spurgeon read as many as 8 hours a day. It can be assumed that he never entered the pulpit that he was not exhausted from the study of the scriptures, fervency in prayer, and thought placed on every illustration.

There are some practical implications that can be found in Spurgeon's preaching that can assist in addressing the needs of the post-modern context. Spurgeon knew the language of the people. He never compromised doctrinal integrity, but he could communicate it such a way that he captured the attention of the culture. This was not the normative among clergy. There was a call liturgy and oratorical perfection during the Victorian era. Today's society appears to be very practical and wants the message presented to them in the language of the culture not in church language. Spurgeon was educated but he was self-educated. He was not influenced by the higher institutions of Christian learning of the day; this made Spurgeon somewhat of an anomaly. Spurgeon understood the people and their needs.

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[197] Larsen, 585.

Another area that can transcend time and culture was his commitment and passion in the message he believed. He believed so much in this message that he was willing to separate from his denominational ties during the *Down-Grade Controversy*. Spurgeon felt that his denomination had taken some relaxed orthodoxy and he called his brothers to arms. He was ridiculed and accused of being mad when he addressed the issues of concern. Spurgeon never faltered; he stood by his message.

CHAPTER 4

A Preaching Methodology that Surpasses Culture

Before evaluating the success that Spurgeon had during a changing culture, one must first consider a caveat regarding how his ministry ended. The methods employed by Spurgeon most assuredly will cross time and cultural barriers, but the success of the method will depend on how one defines success. For Spurgeon it was not defined by ending with the largest church in England; although, it was certainly one of the largest at that time. He defined success by his commitment to the doctrines which he sought to preach and teach. From that standpoint the focus of this paper is not on a particular church growth method that will assure one to have the kind of crowds that Spurgeon had, but to gain insight in how to address the fallacy that has crept into the church through movements such as the ECM and the EV.

In an article in *Preaching* magazine by David Stokes, the question is asked, "How would this innovator be received today?"[198] In other words, the article examined how postmodern culture would receive Spurgeon and his preaching. When it is to be considered that since he was an innovator, he appeared to be somewhat rebellious, which would probably be received well considering the mega themes identified by Barna are against traditional church thought. From another perspective, this young innovator was not tolerant of liberal scholarship and would not compromise his view on scriptural authority as evidenced by his participation in *The Down-Grade Controversy*.

Spurgeon's popularity waned as his health did during the controversy, but he never compromised his position even when he was criticized for leaving the Baptist Union. The controversy never hindered his preaching of the great convictions of his faith. It may have been

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[198] David R. Stokes, "Young Mr. Spurgeon." *Preaching* February 2011, 30.

in question, but he never acted on his emotions regarding the criticism he received.

In Stokes' article, he alludes to a modest comparison of Spurgeon to 21st Century pioneers and innovators in preaching such as Stephen Furtick and Perry Noble. In some ways, one can look at these men and gauge some of the success as a liking to that of Spurgeon. Whoever one compares Spurgeon to, the fact remains that the standard for this work is not to comprise a church growth manual, but a method of making clear the truths of scripture in a day when everything is in question.

There is much that can be learned from the preaching of the man who even as a teenage was referred to by one man as "the sauciest preacher I ever heard." The progression from Spurgeon's time at Waterbeach to New Park Street through the time at The Metropolitan Tabernacle reveals some implications for preaching in a postmodern culture. The culture that Spurgeon preached was not all that different from that of contemporary society.

Elements of a Sermon

Many contemporary preachers and seminary professors have been influenced by Spurgeon either by his writings or his sermons. Dr. Jerry Sutton, who currently serves as Vice President for Academic Development and Dean of Faculty at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, has done Doctoral research on Spurgeon and has developed an approach to sermon preparation that displays many similarities with Spurgeon on preaching methodology. This methodology provides a working structure for sermon preparation. In his book *A Primer on Biblical Preaching*, Sutton has developed 10 steps (which he likens to the courses of a good meal) that will assist the preacher of a postmodern church.

Sutton comments that many preachers try to copy other preachers. While studying the life and preaching of Charles Spurgeon, it must first be said that one has to be true to their unique

personality and gifting. Spurgeon asserts that, "Some men never can do much for God in the way they prefer, for they were never cut out for the work." His first address is to the calling of the preacher. Next he continues by saying, "Let each man find out what God wants him to do, and then let him do it or die in the attempt."[199] This is of the greatest importance before attempting to preach. Sutton agrees that this is the prelude to preaching in any context.

The first *Ingredient to a Great Message*, according to Sutton, is to *have a clear biblical message*. Spurgeon argues for a clear focus on scripture in his writings. In a culture where the Bible has become less authoritative, this is an area of potential compromise. The question that one must consider though is whether or not preaching ceases to be preaching when the focus is on anything other than the Bible. The very definition of biblical preaching as defined in the first section requires a biblical address. Sutton also suggests that the message be "driven by the Word."[200] Spurgeon began with his titles employing biblical content and continues throughout his sermons to maintain those central themes. Spurgeon's desire was that the people of the Metropolitan Tabernacle be spiritually mature. He like Sutton used the analogy of giving people a good meal when they came to hear him preach. It was neglect according to Spurgeon to give them anything less.

The second ingredient is *connecting the truth of scripture with people's lives*. The Bible has to cross the time and cultural barriers that history provides. This connection begins by knowing the meaning and the intent of the original authors and making the connection to contemporary society. This may be where Spurgeon drew some criticisms by spiritualizing. The warning here is to not assume the intention of the original authors, but to do the proper

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[199] Jerry Sutton, *A Primer on Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: CrossBooks Publishing, 2011), 77.

[200] Ibid., 79

investigation while drawing the intended and unintended implications of that author.

This is a major challenge with the postmodern. The postmodern has trouble seeing the connection between the Bible and the current thought. The Bible must have value today for people to consider it authoritative. It is the call of the preacher to make this connection.

The third ingredient that Sutton comments on is one of Spurgeon's largest sections in the *Lectures To My Students*: using *vivid illustrations*. Spurgeon was the master illustrator. His use of stories, anecdotes, and metaphors is unequaled among his contemporaries. The challenge that he faced along with today's preachers is to make these illustrations common to the culture that they are being used in. Once again, adopting a similar metaphor to that of Spurgeon's, Sutton refers to the illustration as a "mirror" or "window." The window allows one to see what is inside. The window makes clear the contents of an object or place. So it is with the illustration; the clearer the illustration, the clearer the contents of the message.

The fourth ingredient given by Sutton is that the sermon is *practically applied*. This answers the question of what God would have one to do in response to the message. Spurgeon believed that the message must first speak to the heart of the preacher before it could speak to the heart of the listener. This can be done by simply asking, "What would God have me do with this information?" This information given during a message has change as its end goal. In his message called "A Golden Prayer" based on John 12:28 Spurgeon talks about the practical application by saying this, "Brethren, we desire the Lord to glorify that name in ourselves by preventing our impatience in suffering, and keeping us from faintness in labor. We beseech our heavenly Father to destroy our selfishness, to cast out our pride, and to overcome every evil propensity which would prevent His getting glory out of us." Spurgeon continues closing the sermon by saying, "Now see how that care is divested of all sorrow by our casting it upon God.

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The prayer is not "Father, help me to glorify thy name,' but it is 'Father, glorify thy name 'Thyself. Thy glory is too much for me to compass, do thine glorify thine ownself. In thy own providence so arrange my position and condition to glorify Thy name. By Thy grace so sustain me, and sanctify me, that I may glorify Thee." After he asserts the thought of God's glory being found in Himself alone, he closes by commenting, "And now, brethren, if you can pray in that fashion your confidence will come back to you; if you have been greatly distracted, calm peace will visit you again, for now you will say, 'I will bear the Lord's will and be content there within."[201] The practical application of the sermon is the content and focus of one's prayer. The selfish prayer would be to glorify God with one's own actions. This constitutes pride and arrogance, but the prayer that says "glorify Thyself" makes God the focus. The prayer of the believer is for God to remove pride and selfishness so that He alone may receive glory.

The fifth ingredient is for the sermon to be *organized with a logical flow or thought*. Spurgeon refers to this as "Our matter should be well arranged" while discussing the contents of sermons. He tells his students,

> Not practical inferences on the basis and doctrines as the top-stones; not metaphors in the foundations, and propositions at the summit; not the more important truths first and the minor teachings last, after the manner of an anticlimax; but the thought must climb and ascend; one stair of teaching leading to another; one door of reasoning conducting to another, and the whole elevating the hearer to a chamber from whose windows truth is seen gleaming in the light of God.[202]

The sermon needs to present a clear and well-arranged thought process for the listener to follow. Many would say that acrostics and detailed outlines help keep this the focus during preparation. While Spurgeon typically had a flow that was built from an outline, his notes were minimal while entering the pulpit, yet he still maintained a logical arrangement of thought. Sutton

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[201] Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1981), 482.

[202] Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 85.

suggests that the text determines the flow and the outline should stem from that. That would be consistent with the definition of biblical preaching.

The sixth ingredient is that the sermon needs a *balance of explanation, illustration, argumentation, and application.* This can be seen not only in Spurgeon's sermons but also in his commentary on the Psalms entitled *The Treasury of David*. In each of the chapters, he begins with an introduction to each subject. Next he moves into an exposition of the text. Once he has done a thorough verse by verse exposition, he has a section called *explanatory notes and quaint sayings*. He concludes with Hints to Preachers which suggests modern usage of the passage and the occasions in which they should be used. Although this is a commentary, it would be consistent with the preparation for any sermon of his that has been published.

Spurgeon was a known for what is referred to as one point sermons. Many today believe that is the way to combat the short attention span of the postmodern church. Sutton finds this a challenge due to the inability to follow the flow of some texts. Once again, the reference point is for biblical preaching. The most natural flow that allows one to grasp the context and content of a passage is one that flows directly from the passage itself.

Seventh, the sermon must be *relevant*. When one reads Spurgeon's sermons, they seem disconnected because they were written with 19th Century relevance in mind. Not only was it 19th Century but it was Victorian England that influenced passages; not in content but in implication. Spurgeon stilled honored the doctrinal content, but sought relevance in his application of it.

Sutton argues for the current issues to address in the local church. The preacher is to address the moral, social, political, and religious issues from the perspective of God's Word. Issues like tolerance that have invaded the church should be addressed. One must also remember Spurgeon's thought that one's message should be balanced. Spending too much time on one

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topic will lose the interest of the listener.

In order to understand these issues to preach on them, one must be out in the culture to understand what the needs really are. St. Patrick the patron Saint to Ireland built an entire missionary philosophy on understanding the culture he was living in. He encouraged his team to be engaged in the lives of the people of Ireland to gain an understanding of their culture but also to win a hearing of his preaching.[203] Like Spurgeon, preaching is about being engaged in the culture of the people so that implications can be drawn from the message that will speak to the culture in which the ministry abides.

The eighth ingredient for a good sermon is the *delivery*. Some practical suggestions from Spurgeon and Sutton are helpful here. They both respond similarly considering the time and cultural distance. One is that both were cautious of using manuscripts from the people. It is better that a preacher jot a few notes or a basic outline down to take to the pulpit with them. This allows the preacher the opportunity to engage the congregation, which can be done through maintaining good eye contact with the audience. Once eye contact has been established the sermon can be more personal, allowing the preacher to connect. Another suggestion is for voice projection. Spurgeon spoke to thousands of people in the buildings he preached in with no amplification. While acoustics were considered in the construction of the buildings, the voice projection of Spurgeon was apparently phenomenal for the sheer volume of people he preached to. Although that is not required today, it is helpful to have a well heard and presented sermon in order to connect.

Sutton, like Spurgeon, speaks to the gestures of the speaker. Annoying mannerism's must be identified and avoided. There are certain gestures that speak to the culture of the day.

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[203] George G. Hunter, III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

Preachers that pound the pulpit with their fists are not beneficial to most postmodern listeners. Confidence that exudes energy would be accepted. People respond to passionate appeals, but not arrogance. The challenge to authority would most likely leave a negative response to certain gestures of Victorian England. Most likely Spurgeon would tell one to be innovative in their presentation. Many preachers like Stanley argue for a conversational tone while preaching. The caution here is to not be so conversational that confidence and passion can be questioned.

The ninth ingredient is to *preach for a verdict*. If one does not expect to see lives transformed from preaching, they certainly will not. Spurgeon preached as if every man's soul depended on it. Being a confessed Calvinists, he prayed for "God to save the elect, and then elect some more."[204] Spurgeon admitted that he was a poor Calvinist from this perspective. He believed that many would be converted every time he stepped in the pulpit, and in most cases they were.

Spurgeon on Preaching and Culture

This has become a challenge in the postmodern local church. With the exception of a few, some churches are experiencing biological or transfer growth opposed to conversional growth. This is possibly caused by preachers who no longer preach with a verdict in mind and no longer expect people to be converted. Sutton speaks to the matter of urgency in preaching for a verdict. This urgency is a result of knowing what is at risk for those who reject the message of the gospel. It is the duty of the called to envision the congregation eternally separated from God before, during, and after preaching.

Spurgeon knew well the perils of a rebellious generation. In his messages to the ministers from the Pastor's College, he gave the concerns and the evils of the age, but he followed them

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[204] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 119.

with some practical considerations. In addition to the nine ingredients previously written, here are some further considerations in preaching in a postmodern age. He begins his discourse by saying, "NOW FOR THE REMEDY. What are we to do to meet this superstition, and this unbelief, and this disintegration, and this growing worldliness and drunkenness? I have only one remedy to prescribe, and that is, that we do preach the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Chris, in all length and breadth of doctrine, precept, spirit, example, and power."[205] While Spurgeon encourages the pastors to focus on preaching Jesus Christ, he employs some practical advice in doing that.

To start with, he reiterates that "the old, old gospel is to be preached."[206] Then he comments one must *have more knowledge of the gospel*. There is never a point where the minister should be content with their knowledge of the gospel. Life is a continuous pursuit of this knowledge, and Spurgeon modeled that with his desire to read and learn. He goes on to say that one should know it so well as that it becomes part of their normal conversation. There are more resources to learn about the gospel now than ever before. It is an abuse of those who have devoted their life to studying so that others may learn not to take full advantage of the reference material at ones access.

Next he says that one must an *on-going experience with the gospel*. To preach a gospel that has not first been experienced by the preacher will be fruitless. The fruit in preaching comes from a preacher who has firsthand knowledge of what the gospel can do. This is a life-long process. A preacher should be able to stand in the pulpit and preach from experience the faith that is essential to the life of a believer. Faith grows from stretching it and exercising it. Abraham

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[205] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 104.

[206] Ibid., 109.

was called to a land that he had never known before. He was also called to take Isaac to Mount

Moriah and offer him there a sacrifice to God. This challenged Abraham and he trusted God.

Abraham was then able to proclaim first-hand the benefit of trusting God. So it is to be with

preacher, especially in a society that is skeptical about the Bible. The personal experience of the

preacher will be crucial for winning souls.

Third Spurgeon says that *the gospel must remain the focus of the content*. On this matter

Spurgeon states,

> It is astonishing after all the preaching that there has been in England, how little the
> gospel is understood by the mass of men. They are still children, and have need to be told
> the ABC of the gospel of Christ. Keep most of those themes, brethren, which are most
> soul-saving, - to those which are practically useful to the people. Keep close to the cross
> of Christ. Point continually to the atoning sacrifice, and to the doctrine of justification, by
> faith, which. When preached aright, are never preached without the Divine
> approbation.[207]

This was a theme that ran continuously throughout the multiple volumes of Spurgeon's sermons.

In Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, he states the function of the Word of God in preaching by

saying; "The Word of God is the theme which must be given to proclamation as such if it is to be

real proclamation."[208] From this, it should be every preacher's presupposition that the Word of

God become the object of preaching. He further comments on this by saying, "The

presupposition which makes proclamation and therewith makes the Church the Church is the

Word of God. This attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles to

whom it was originally and once and for all spoken by God's revelation."[209] It is disconcerting

that preachers are becoming more topical in preaching and avoiding doctrines that are considered

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[207] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 115.

[208] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God.* Vol. 1.1 of *Church Dogmatics*, 2nd ed., (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1975), 91.

[209] Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God. Vol. 1.1 of Church Dogmatics*, 88.

"difficult" or challenging to society. The very essence of the gospel questions man's ability to make sense of life on their own. Spurgeon continues to exhort this by saying, "Keep to the gospel, then, more and more. Give the people Christ and nothing but Christ. Satiate them, even though some of them should say that you also nauseate them with the gospel."[210]

Next Spurgeon says that *preaching must become more earnest and practical*. Genuine preaching is a staple for gaining an audience. People question the genuineness of many church leaders today. It is the place of the church to instill faith and confidence in the Lord. This is increasingly more difficult in today's society. It must be understood the audience that is the target is human and not divine. One of the most famous sayings of Spurgeon argues his point here, "We must preach as men to men, not as divines before the clergy and nobility. Preach straight at them. It is of no use to fire your rifle into the sky when your object is to pierce men's hearts." [211] Being direct but not arrogant helps instill confidence in those who are hearing. Confidence and not arrogance is the aim. He continues in his comment by saying, "Aim at effect, - effect upon the conscience and upon the heart."[212] If the heart and conscience are seared then change can take place, and change and transformation are the ultimate goal in preaching.

Next he comments that *preaching should be more simple and clear*. People are no longer impressed with eloquence and great oratory. They are interested in the heart and what has made a difference in lives. There should be a proper balance of heart felt preaching while not compromising the doctrines. Spurgeon says to preach as a "lover of souls."[213] Those who have real tragedies and problems in life are not in need of poetic sermons, they need the hope that

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[210] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 117.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid., 118.

[213] Sutton, *A Primer on Biblical Preaching*, 121.

comes from the gospel. People are hungry for genuine talk about Christ, not a performance of theatrics.

Another area that Spurgeon speaks on is to *be an example outside the pulpit*. In other words one's life should be the same in the pulpit and outside as well. Too many find Christianity to be a part time relationship that lasts for two or three hours a week. The postmodern has found that many preachers are hypocrites, who portray themselves to be something different than they really are. This causes even more reason for skepticism. The only response to this is that preacher must be genuine and transparent while not engaging in excess of self-disclosure. This is a difficult balance. Relevance is found when common struggles are recognized between preacher and congregant, but the risk is over the loss of confidence in the pastor's ability to minister effectively to the needs of the congregation. It is for this reason that there must be a balance, and one must be genuine.

The last thing he discusses in this section is that *one must be saturated in the gospel*. Each message must soak in like a wet sponge. The text needs to be read over and over until it sparks consistent thoughts in one's mind. When this happens it is helpful to jot down those precious thoughts that the Lord has placed in the preachers mind so that they may be communicated. It is a special thing to sense that a word has been given from the Lord, and that word is to be shared with others. That is what David meant when he said to "meditate on the word, day and night."[214] It becomes a part of the thought and function of the life; then and only then can that word be shared to others, when it has permeated the life of the one speaking on it.

Spurgeon's final comments sound like that of a pre-game speech, "But we have only one remedy for them; preach Jesus Christ, and let us do it more and more. By the road side, in the

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[214] Psalm 1:2.

little room in the theatre, anywhere, everywhere, let us preach Christ. Write books if you like, do anything else within your power; but whatever else you cannot do; Preach Christ." It is clear that his motivation was to magnify the name of Christ whenever and wherever. That should be the primary goal for biblical preaching. He goes on to say, "The Devil cannot endure gospel preaching; nothing worries him so much as preaching. Preaching is our great weapon, so use it perpetually; preaching is the Lord's battering-ram wherewith the walls of old Babylon are being shaken to their foundations. Preach, preach, preach, preach, preach, preach til you can preach no more, then go above to sing the praises of God in Heaven, and to make known to the angels, the wonders of redeeming love."[215] The passion that Spurgeon had for the Lord was unmistakable, and warrants a closer examination when one *considers the outcome of his way of life*. His preaching talked the Modern though of the 19th Century and what he has communicated here was his remedy to the madness falling on society. There should be a strong connection made between this time period and the current time period, although Barna's findings reveal some differing characteristics.

The aim of preaching is in further consideration when Spurgeon gives his final message to the preachers at the conference. He asks a rhetorical question by saying, "How do you at this time look at your life's mission? What is that mission? Where are you at?"[216] These challenges the very core of what ministry is about. It forces one to answer the purpose of ministry, therefore giving ultimate direction. Once that direction has been determined, then a plan of how to accomplish that may be formulated. The formulation of this plan will be essential to moving forward. The rest of Spurgeon's comment goes like this, "I hear your answer, 'Our chief end is to

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[215] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 127.

[216] Ibid., 299.

glorify God. 'We do not regard it as our first business to convert sinners, nor to edify saints; but to glorify God. If we preached God's truth, and on any one occasion no souls have been saved thereby, we are still 'unto God a sweet savour of Christ, 'as well in those that perish as in those that are saved."[217] This in many ways is a relief to those pressures placed on the preacher's for job performance. The standard in which the preacher is measured according to Spurgeon is the measure of how does one's preaching magnify God. While the desire to see more people converted or regenerated, the aim is much more significant, it is to glorify God. He also describes the pleasing effect this has on God, "The preaching of Jesus Christ is the burning of sweet odours before the throne of God, and to the Lord it is evermore an acceptable oblation."[218] The words of well done my faithful servant is a sweet sound to the saint of God, but God's pleasure is found in those who make much of Him. To life's end, regardless of modern or postmodern, *God's glory is the chief end*.

One simple question may be asked of the man of God who stands faithfully in the pulpit and pastors a local church in today's times: "Does it glorify God?" In the words of Spurgeon, "If it does not glorify God, it is not genuine gospel, and it will not benefit us or our hearers."[219] In contemporary culture, preaching has become a puzzle, in which the pastor must try to figure out what will reach a certain generation or culture. Preaching, however, is more about reaching God in Heaven with His praises. The worship of God is to the primary concern of preaching, and if God so chooses to bless it with the conversion of the masses, then He will. The design of a sermon cannot be done with man in mind, only God.

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[217] Spurgeon, An All Round Ministry, 299 .

[218] Ibid.

[219] Ibid.

Preaching the truth of the gospel repeatedly and consistently is sure to glorify God and *build up the church*. The aim of preaching is to glorify God, and God is glorified when a consistent gospel is preached, resulting in the surrender of people's lives to Him. Spurgeon maintains that continually changing the truth hinders this process. One must be consistent and confident in the truth that is being portrayed. With the average tenure of a pastor in America today being less than 5 years, it is understandable why many churches never grow in their conversions and baptisms. Truth must be maintained for a period of time before people acknowledge it as truth.

Spurgeon follows this up by considering what he refers to as *Urgent Necessities.* The first of these necessities is that preachers are to be better men. The measure of a preacher must be made in comparison to Jesus, not other men or preachers. Considering this, they will find that they never measure up, for a true comparison made to the Christ finds that one always has room to be better. In this age of tolerance and compromise, there must be a consistent call to holiness and find grace in times of need. Preachers are to never cease aspiring for true holiness.

True holiness can be accomplished by a clearer understanding of what one believes. Clarity is invaluable when it comes to the pursuit of holiness and righteousness. The Reformers such as Calvin were focused on reforming the body and soul. Though Calvin's strict pursuit of a disciplined life in Geneva cost him his influence, his second attempt at reform in Geneva would prove to be more successful, but still with complications. It was this pursuit of holiness that gained him much advantage in what success he did have there.

The third urgent necessity is that one should have more faith in the grace of God. Faith is an abundant trust in God, that He will accomplish His will regardless of circumstances. Faith understands that God in His sovereignty will follow through with His plan of redemption, which

allows for the purpose and will of His children. The example in faith is of great concern in postmodern philosophy. The words and meanings of those doctrines taught must be exemplified in the life of the preacher, or others will not see genuine faith. Trusting God to accomplish these purposes not only communicates total confidence in God but strengthens faith.

The next necessity is one that Spurgeon could have never been in question of, and it is to have a love and compassion for souls. This characteristic reverts back to Jesus Himself, of who the Scripture states that He "looked on the crowds with compassion."[220] This compassion was one of the driving forces of His short life and ministry. Spurgeon displayed a compassion for men's souls that drove him to tirelessly preach and write his health away. He worked endlessly to proclaim the gospel that he believed in, and as a result he is one of the most recognized authors and preachers of all time.

Spurgeon was also a firm believer in *self-sacrifice* in the ministry. Spurgeon said, "Sooner than deny the truth, we must forego every meed of honour, every particle of deserved esteem, every rag of repute."[221] A true calling knows and is willing to let go of everything in order to preach. Ministry is about sacrifice not preservation. The example of sacrifice was displayed by the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane when he exclaimed referring His upcoming sacrifice, "Not my will, but yours be done."[222]

In addition to teaching the fundamental truths of the gospel, Spurgeon encourages his readers *to work toward and expect the salvation of the hearer*. It is an unfortunate thing if a preacher no longer expects that people will be saved in any culture, whether modern or

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[220] Matt. 9:36.

[221] Spurgeon, *All-Round Ministry*, 307.

[222] Luke 22:42.

postmodern. Spurgeon believed in laboring hard for the immediate salvation of people's souls. This is why he was so focused on illustrating and applying his messages. He likens it to a doctor who prescribes medicine but makes no attempt at seeing the patient follow through with the application of it. It is one thing to put the responsibility off on the patient, but a doctor who truly wants to see their patient healed will work arduously to follow through with it.

There is unfortunately no new method of ministry that can be distinctly formulized from Spurgeon or anyone else. The secret that has been revealed is one must simply be faithful in those things that glorify God. Society is continuously evolving from one culture to the next, and if scripture did not remain constant throughout these changes, it would not be something that would be worth following. Therefore one must consistently and constantly preach Christ. The challenge comes when people no longer want to hear this truth, and that is when faith is put to the test.

Spurgeon's journey from Waterbeach to The Metropolitan Tabernacle reveals that he remained faithful to his views of preaching and doctrine and he remained faithful until the end of his life. That is why Spurgeon invested so much time and resources into the students at his college. He wanted men to continue to preach against the compromises he believed that the Baptist Union was making as a result of modern thought and philosophy. Spurgeon was thinking about the many generations that would follow in the fraternity of preaching. The "young boy preacher from Fens" made a tremendous contribution to preaching, and his work and messages have been preserved for ages to come.

If one could have a conversation with Spurgeon now, it would probably revolve around his focus on glorifying God through the ministry of preaching. He might also stress the need for innovation without compromise, which results in the truth of the message being told in every

culture and society. He might refer to Paul's exhortation of Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2,

> Herald and preach the Word! Keep your sense of urgency [stand by, be at hand and ready], whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable. [Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome, you as a preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their live are wrong.] And convince them, rebuking and correcting, warning and urging and encouraging them, being unflagging and inexhaustible in patience and teaching.[223]

This passage fully describes what Spurgeon would tell the pastors of the college today. In fact this verse was summarizes much of what has been revealed about Spurgeon's ministry in formulating a preaching philosophy that combats the postmodern challenge. The first imperative is to preach the words of God revealed in the Bible. Spurgeon would say to fall in love with it and never veer away from the truths within. Next he would say to keep a sense of the urgency of preaching it. The compassion for lost souls compelled Spurgeon to continue despite adversity. Third, he would say to stop at nothing to get the message out and persuade people to experience life change through the living Word.

One might further question Spurgeon about the urgency of this message. He might respond with the rest of this section using 2 Timothy 4:3-5:

> For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, and will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions. As for you, be calm and cool and steady, accept and suffer unflinchingly every hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fully perform all the duties of your ministry.[224]

Spurgeon took Paul's words to Timothy as his own. He remained faithful during suffering and hardships and did the work of an evangelist. The challenges that Paul communicated to Timothy

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[223] Amplified Version.

[224] Amplified Version.

are the same challenges that Spurgeon faced as well as the challenges found in the current

society. Many people want to hear what pleases them, not what rebukes them. They move from

church to church to find someone who preaches what they want to hear. Many times what they

want to hear is error as was mentioned in the Amplified version of this text. Spurgeon considered

the controversies of his time to be heresy and was willing to stake his life on it.

Spurgeon was well acquainted with the travail of his society. He encouraged and exhorted his

hearers because of his desire to see God glorified. His words to the pastors at the conference

were, "The times are bad, but they have been bad before. You have to fight with Appollyon, but

many have met this arch-enemy before your day. Gird up the loins of your mind, and stand fast,

for the Lord is greater than the times. The days are evil, but evil days are followed by good

days."[225] This statement asserts that history repeats itself, and there is a continuous cycle of good

versus evil. The key for the preacher is to be continually prepared to fight for the cause of Christ.

He knew the fight is one that will last throughout the ages, and Spurgeon wanted to equip those

that were not yet born to do the battle: "What is being done today will affect the next centuries,

unless the Lord should very speedily come. . . . I believe that if we walk uprightly and decidedly

before God at this time, we shall make the future of England bright with the gospel."[226] This

encouragement is followed by a strict warning, "but trimming now, and debasing doctrine now,

will affect children yet unborn, generation after generation. Posterity must be considered. I do

not look so much at what is to happen today, for these things relate to eternity. "[227] It was not an

option with him that a trend is started of compromise and tolerance of theology be made so that

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[225] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 312.

[226] Ibid., 360.

[227] Ibid.

"itching ears" would be satisfied. Spurgeon's devotion can be sensed in his statement, "For my part, I am quite willing to be eaten of dogs for the next fifty years; but the more distant future shall vindicate me."[228] Spurgeon was concerned with eternity and pleasing God more than man. It is appropriate to say that he was living for the future not the present.

Application of Spurgeon's Christ-centered preaching

Referring to the previous section, the following can be deduced regarding a postmodern application of Charles Spurgeon's methods of biblical preaching: live to glorify God, preach in view of eternity, and never compromise the truth of the Word. To further clarify these points, a more detailed, seven-step method will be presented in order to allow the preacher to practically communicate the timeless truths of the gospel to society.

The first step is to *research the culture in which one is ministering in*. Spurgeon was among the people. He walked the streets of London talking with people and understood the problems that were rampant in that society. He knew that employing a traditional Victorian style of oratory would not appeal to the common people of London.

The second step is to *speak the language of the common people*. The social class lines are blurred in today's society. To cater to one or the other limits the influence of the minister. The preacher of the gospel needs to be concerned with people as a whole. Spurgeon preached the gospel to all people, regardless of his views on election. He concerned himself with reaching all people not a particular class, and he spoke as if he were one of the people with an urgent message for all.

The third step is *to preach Christ as central to the message*. While Spurgeon was not considered to be a great expositor, he did seek to present a solid biblical message. Even with his

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[228] Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, 360.

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wavering view on the allegorical style of interpretation, which is not a popular method of interpretation by most conservatives, he continued to have an innate knowledge of the scriptures. This knowledge came out when he preached without anything more than a simple outline. The information that he amassed during his many hours reading allowed him to repeat all that he had learned. Spurgeon's memory was no doubt his ally, but it also came from consistent study of the scriptures and reading those who had commented on them.

The fourth step is *to preach with as few notes as possible*. While some of the greatest sermons ever preached were read from men like Jonathan Edwards, the majority of people in today's culture respond better to a conversational style message. This informative approach that allows one to connect with people through their eyes keeps their attention. Spurgeon connected well because he looked at people, almost as if he were talking directly to them.

The fifth step is *to not shy away from using doctrinal and theological expression as the emphasis of the sermon*. A consideration here is that while it is encouraged to use these expressions, it must be expressed in a clear manner. The concept here is to expose the meaning of these terms in relation to maturity and literacy. People have questions they want answered, and the answers they are given will determine what they believe about the scriptures and God. In a society of pluralism, there needs to be clarity regarding the truth of scripture. When one reads John 14:6, which exclusively says that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, they must understand there are no other options.

The sixth step is *to illustrate the message with modern examples and metaphors*. Clarity is realized when people associate the message with something they can relate to. Spurgeon understood the culture in which he lived, and he provided illustrations based on that culture. The examples and illustrations he used would not be appropriate today. This comes from paying

attention to the news, social media, current events, and cultural awareness. This also is a direct result of spending time with the people in their culture.

The seventh step simple yet profound and comes directly from Spurgeon himself. One must ask the question, "*Will this message glorify God*?" The message must contain the gospel or it will not glorify God. A message that is absent of Jesus Christ can only be information. Preaching should be done with the goal of expecting people to be saved and changed for eternity. If that question cannot be answered, then the message is not ready to be preached.

Conclusion

The church is faced with the tremendous challenge of preaching in the Twenty-first Century. The Emergent Church Movement and the Emergent Village have made this challenge even more difficult with their influence on postmodern culture. The church needs to be aware of the influence of movements like this one and respond in a way that does not compromise the clarity of scripture.

By looking at the preaching of men such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon, history can give one some insight into the things that have happened in the past with similar circumstances and outcomes. For Spurgeon the challenge was the encounter with the Baptist Union in their attempt to unify the Free Church. The clarity of scripture was in question and Spurgeon's concern was that the Union would compromise the truth for the sake of unity. Spurgeon's campaign proved to be a struggle in accomplishing a set of doctrinal standards that were un-wavering. The fracas did leave the current church leaders with motivation and practical application while facing the challenges of postmodern culture. Spurgeon's example has left one with the idea that our faith and doctrines are worth confrontation. Spurgeon's life displayed a message that was worth waging war for, that message is the glory of God displayed among the nations.

There is a word that comes to mind as an emphasis of the project in facing the perilous philosophy of the postmodern, faithfulness. God is glorified when His people are faithful to His words and commands. This was Spurgeon. Because of his faithfulness the seven practical applications gathered are worthwhile *Insight's from the Charles Spurgeon's Christ-centered Preaching for a Changing Culture*.

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