

C. H. SPURGEON'S FORGOTTEN PRAYER MEETING ADDRESSES: FORGOTTEN PRAYER MEETING ADDRESSES AND OTHER FORGOTTEN METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE SERMONS. EDITED BY TERENCE P. CROSBY. LEOMINSTER: DAY ONE PUBLICATIONS, 2011. (291 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1846252389]

IAN MCDONALD

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

Over one hundred and twenty years after his death, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) continues to stand out as arguably the most famous name in Baptist history. Many volumes have been published recording his sermons and other writings, and the “Prince of Preachers” rightly remains the source of a great deal of study by Baptist historians. Many of his sermons have been translated into numerous languages and distributed around the globe. Taking all of these factors into account, it is highly surprising that there are still some of his sermons and other addresses which have remained in total obscurity and have not been collated together for publication.

Dr Terry Crosby and Day One Publications have done a great service to theologians, believers, and Baptist historians worldwide with the production of this collection. Crosby knows Spurgeon’s works well and has compiled and edited many collections of the preacher’s work, including the six volume *365 Days with C.H. Spurgeon* series. This new collection aims to bring to wider attention a number of rare sermons which would probably have appeared in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, had it not ceased publication abruptly in 1917, as well as short prayer meeting address from the Tabernacle’s prayer meetings. The sermons and addresses included in this book link well with the 1901 publication *Only a Prayer Meeting* and the sermons compiled by Eric Hayden in *Spurgeon’s Sermons Preached on Unusual Occasions*.

The first section of the book contains twenty—one addresses delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle’s prayer meetings. Crosby writes that his desire is for “God’s people [to] be encouraged to regard individual prayer and the church prayer meeting a priority in the Christian life” (p. 5). It can certainly be the case that a church’s prayer meeting is one of its worst attended services and prayer can slip down the priority list of busy Christians. However, during Spurgeon’s pastorate, the Metropolitan Tabernacle’s prayer meetings were well attended and were a significant part of the church’s weekly programme.

From the prayer meeting addresses in this book, it is clear that Spurgeon placed as high priority on prayer in a Christian’s life. In Chapter 2 an address entitled “His Heart’s Desire,” he writes, “Oh, happy they who can thus put their prayers into the very heart of Christ” (p. 22). It is very appropriate that first prayer address examines “Three models of prayer” looking at Jacob and Elijah before noting that *the* model of prayer is Jesus Christ Himself.

Chapter Seven’s address entitled “The Operations of the Spirit” on the Holy Spirit and His work is a real highlight. The work of the most mysterious and least discussed member of the Trinity is clearly outlined and articulated.

The prayer meeting addresses are short and direct as prayer meeting addresses should be. They are there to focus the Christian’s mind ahead of a period of prayer with ones brothers and sisters in Christ. In

the addresses in this compilation it is clear that Spurgeon used his addresses to focus the mind on a specific issue or doctrine, and they further demonstrate that he was just as adept at writing short addresses as he was at longer sermons. They are high quality and to the point.

The second part of book is a miscellany of rare, some previously unpublished, sermons or, in some cases, sermon notes. These were preached on many different occasions ranging from an address to senior Sunday School scholars in 1867 to an address to the Butchers' Festival at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1878. Not all were preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, for example, one was preached at an unnamed chapel in Brighton, whilst another was preached at the John Street Chapel, Bedford Row, London. The address to the Butchers' Festival is both charming and amusing but is very much of its period and some of the language used by Spurgeon would probably be considering patronising if used now.

Included is a sermon from 1866 which was delivered to the Baptist Union. Entitled "Holy Fire" it was preached over twenty years before the Downgrade Controversy which led to Spurgeon's and the Metropolitan Tabernacle's withdrawal from the Union. Interestingly Spurgeon speaks of his grave concerns surrounding "doubt" and the questioning of scripture, "To be a doubter is thought, nowadays, as a token of being a great thinker. I believe it is a token of being a great simpleton. . . . Doubting is getting to be so dreadfully impudent that we shall have to give it a good thrashing" (p. 119). With the audience who would have been in attendance on this occasion, this suggests he was troubled by changing theological trends within the Union well before the Downgrade controversy broke out in full.

Spurgeon's theology shines through in this collection. The sermon in Chapter 24 is a staunch defence of traditional biblical inerrancy. Spurgeon speaks out clearly against what he saw as the rising tide of liberalism, biblical criticism, and fresh interpretations of key Christian doctrines. Similarly, his adherence to evangelical Calvinism is very evident in Chapters 27 "The sum and substance of all theology," and 28 "The great invitation," as he distances himself from both Hyper Calvinism and Arminianism. Chapter 8 examines how prayer fits into Calvinist theology and reasons for answered and unanswered prayer.

Historic sermons are an excellent source of material for historians, however one of the negatives associated with them is that there may be occasions where instances or people are referred to who were famous in there day, but are totally unknown in the twenty-first century. There are a couple of instances of this in this compilation and it can lead to illustrations losing their meaning. To overcome this, perhaps footnotes could have been employed to explain these instances/persons.

As would be expected from a publication such as this, there is a lack of flow as the sermons contained in the volume are drawn from various dates and are not a series in themselves. However, this need not be a negative and it results in great variety; there is one short address delivered to recent converts and another delivered on the eve of the 1868 UK General Election where it is clear to someone who knows British political history, which party Spurgeon wants to succeed!

This collection is a valuable resource for Baptist historians. The prayer meeting addresses and sermons fill in some of the gaps in the Spurgeon canon. They will also be a source of encouragement to believers who are seeking encouragement in their Christian lives from one of the greatest preachers. The short nature of the prayer meeting addresses makes them excellent reading material for a few spare minutes

in a busy day. Dr Crosby should be highly commended for collating the material and producing this interesting and useful publication.