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**LIFE AND WORKS
OF REV. CHARLES H. SPURGEON**

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THE anniversary meeting of the Cambridge Union of Sunday-schools in 1853 was held at Cambridge, on which occasion Mr. Spurgeon was called upon to speak. The part he took was of remarkable significance. There was nothing in his manner or his remarks which was specially attractive to his audience; but there was an unseen agency at work with the speaker as well as in the audience. There was present at that meeting a gentleman from Essex, on whose mind the address delivered by Mr. Spurgeon made a lasting

Shortly afterwards he met in London with one of the deacons of the Baptist church on New Park Street, Southwark, a church which had once flourished like the ancient cedars of Lebanon, but which was then so far shorn of its former glory as to give cause of serious consideration. Anxiously did the thoughtful deacon tell his tale of a scattered church and a diminished congregation. Fresh upon the mind of his hearer was the effect of the speech of the young minister at Cambridge, and he ventured to speak of the youthful evangelist of Waterbeach as a minister likely to be the means of reviving interest in the declining church at New Park Street. The two friends separated, the deacon not much impressed with what he had heard; and things grew worse.

Invited to London.

But finally a correspondence was commenced between Deacon James Low and Mr. Spurgeon, which soon resulted in the latter receiving an invitation to come to London and preach before them in their large chapel. The work was altogether of God, man only made the arrangements. The motto of Julius Caesar may be modified to express the results of the visit: Mr. Spurgeon came; he preached; he conquered.

For some months the pulpit had been vacant, the pews forsaken, the aisles desolate, and the exchequer empty. Decay had set in so seriously that the deacons lost heart, and, until Mr. Spurgeon arrived, the cause seemed hopeless. In the autumn of 1853 he first occupied New Park Street pulpit. The chapel, capable of holding twelve hundred people, had about two hundred occupants at the first service. The preacher was a young man who had just passed his nineteenth year. In his sermon he spoke with the freedom and boldness which evinced that he believed what he preached, and believed that his message was from God. Some were disappointed; others resolved to oppose, and did oppose; but by far the greater proportion were disposed to hear him again.

Instant Success.

The result of the first sermon was proved, in a few hours, to have been a success. The evening congregation was greatly increased, partly from curiosity, partly from the youth of the preacher and his unusual style of address. Mr. Spurgeon was again invited to take the pulpit on another Sunday as early as possible, for a feeling of excitement was created, and it required to be satisfied. After consulting with his church at Waterbeach, he arranged to supply the new Park Street pulpit during three alternate Lord's days. The desire to hear the young preacher having greatly extended, it was determined to invite Mr. Spurgeon from his rustic retreat to undertake the heavy responsibility of pastor of one of the most ancient Baptist churches in London, and formerly the most influential; and he entered on that duty in the month of April, 1854.

We are permitted to give two of Mr. Spurgeon's letters to the church at the time of his appointment, which will most clearly state the facts relating to his coming to London. The first of the following letters was written to Deacon Low shortly before Mr. Spurgeon left Cambridge, and the second is dated from his first lodgings immediately after his permanent arrival in London. It will be seen that these letters exhibit a wisdom and maturity scarcely to be expected from a youth of twenty.

No. 60 PARK STREET, CAMBRIDGE, Jan. 27, 1854.

TO JAMES LOW, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,-- I cannot help feeling intense ratification at the unanimity of the church at New Park Street in relation to their invitation to me, Had I been uncomfortable in my present situation, I should have felt unmixed pleasure at the prospect Providence seems to open up before me; but having a devoted and loving people, I feel I know not how.

One thing I know, namely, that I must soon be severed from them by necessity, for they do not raise sufficient to maintain me in comfort. Had they done so I should have turned a deaf ear to any request to leave them, at least for the present. But now my Heavenly Father drives me forth from this little Garden of Eden, and while I see that I must go out, I leave it with reluctance, and tremble to tread the unknown land before me.

When I first ventured to preach at Waterbeach, I only accepted an invitation for three months, on the condition that if in that time I should see good reasons for leaving, or they on their part should wish for it, I should be at liberty to cease supplying, or they should have the same power to request me to do so before the estimation of the time.

With regard to a six months' invitation from you, I have no objection to the length of time, but rather approve of the prudence of the church in wishing to have one so young as myself on an extended period of approbation. But I write after well weighing the matter, when I say positively that I cannot-- I *dare* not-- accept an unqualified invitation for so long a time. My objection is not to the length of time of probation, but it ill becomes a youth to promise to preach to a London congregation so long, until he knows them and they know him. I would engage to supply for three months of that time, and then, should the congregation fail, or the church disagree, I would reserve to myself liberty, without breach of engagement, to retire; and you would on your part have the right to dismiss me without seeming to treat me ill. Should I see no reason for so doing, and the church still retain their wish for me, I can remain the other three months, either with or without the formality of a further invitation; but even during the second three months I should not like to regard myself as a fixture, in case of ill success, but would only be a supply, liable to a fortnight's dismissal or resignation.

Perhaps this is not business like,-- I do not know; but this is the course I should prefer, if it would be agreeable to the church. Enthusiasm and popularity are often the crackling of thorns, and soon expire. I do not wish to be a hindrance if I cannot be a help.

With regard to coming at once, I think I must not. My own deacons just hint that I ought to finish the quarter here: though, by ought, they mean simply,-- pray do so if you can. This would be too long a delay. I wish to help them until they can get supplies, which is only to be done with great difficulty; and, as I have given you four Sabbaths, I hope you will allow me to give them four in return. I would give them the first and second Sabbaths in February, and two more in a month or six weeks' time. I owe them much for their kindness, although they insist that the debt lies on their side. Some of them hope, and almost pray, that you may be tired in three months so that I may be again sent back to them.

Thus, my dear sir, I have honestly poured out my heart to you. You are too kind. You will excuse me if I err, for I wish to do right to you, to my people, and to all, as being not mine own, but bought with a price.

I respect the honesty and boldness of the small minority, and only wonder that the number was not greater. I pray God that if He does not see fit that I should remain with you, the majority may be quite as much the other way at the end of six months, so that I may never divide you into parties.

Pecuniary matters I am well satisfied with. And now one thing is due to every minister, and I pray you to remind the church of it, namely, that in private, as well as public, they must all wrestle in prayer to God that I may be sustained in the great work.

I am, with the best wishes for your health, and the greatest respect,

Yours truly,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Call to New Park Street Chapel.

Viewed in the light of subsequent results it will not surprise the reader to learn that it did not take the church six months to determine their part of the contract. Before three months had passed away "the small minority" had been absorbed into the majority, and the entire church united in giving their young minister, not yet twenty years old, an invitation to accept the pastorate, both cordial and unanimous. Mr. Spurgeon's second letter at this period will best explain the real facts:--

75 DOVER ROAD, BOROUGH, April 28, 1854.

To the Baptist Church of Christ worshipping in New Park Street Chapel, Southwark:

DEARLY BELOVED IN CHRIST JESUS-- I have received your unanimous invitation, as continued in a resolution passed by you on the 19th instant, desiring me to accept the pastorate among you. No lengthened reply is required; there is but one answer to so loving and cordial an invitation. I accept. I have not been perplexed as to what my reply shall be, for many things constrain me thus to answer.

I sought not to come to you, for I was the minister of an obscure but affectionate people: I never solicited advancement. The first note of invitation from your deacons came to me quite unlooked for, and I trembled at the idea of preaching in London. I could not understand how it came about, and even now I am filled with astonishment at the wondrous Providence. I would wish to give myself into the hands of our covenant God, whose wisdom directs all things. He shall choose for me; and so far as I can judge this is His choice.

I feel it to be a high honor to be a pastor of a people who can mention glorious names as my predecessors, and I entreat of you to remember me in prayer, that I may realize the solemn responsibility of my trust. Remember my youth and inexperience; pray that these may not hinder my usefulness. I trust, also, that the remembrance of these may lead you

to forgive the mistakes I may make, or unguarded words I may utter.

Blessed be the name of the Most High! if He has called me to this office He will support me in it; otherwise, how should a child, a youth, have the presumption thus to attempt a work which filled the heart and hands of Jesus? Your kindness to me has been very great, and my heart is knit unto you. I fear not your steadfastness; I fear my own. The gospel, I believe, enables me to venture great things, and by faith I venture this. I ask your co-operation in every good work,-- in visiting the sick, in bringing in inquirers, and in mutual edification.

Oh, that I may be no injury to you, but a lasting benefit! I have no more to say, only this: that if I have expressed myself in these few words in a manner unbecoming my youth and inexperience, you will not impute it to arrogance, but forgive my mistake.

And now, commending you to our covenant-keeping God, the triune Jehovah, I am yours to serve in the

gospel,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Before three months of the new pastorate had expired the fame of the young minister had spread over the metropolis, crowds of people flocked to his chapel at every service, and the newspapers, week by week for some time, were asking: Who is this Spurgeon? For a long time that question was a puzzle to many minds; but one thing was certain, he had secured the ear and the attention of the public, who waited upon his ministry by thousands.

The Black Flag.

The summer of 1854 will long be remembered for the frightful scourge of Asiatic cholera with which the great city was visited. The black flag could be seen stretched across streets to warn strangers of the close proximity of plague-stricken dwellings.

On all sides there was anxious foreboding, sorrow, or bereavement. The young pastor's services were eagerly sought for, his time and strength taxed to their utmost; but he discharged the duties of the emergency with a true and manly courage. A paragraph from his "Treasury of David," on Psalm xci., most graphically describes this trying period:

"In the year 1854 when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighborhood in which I labored was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedsides of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardor to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. Many friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little

more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest. I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it; for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:

'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'

"The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The Providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvellous power I adore the Lord my God."

Publishing Sermons.

In the autumn of the first year's pastorate he preached a sermon from the words, "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" The sermon attracted attention, was much talked about by his hearers, and during the following week it appeared under the title of "Harvest Time," and had a large sale. This led the publisher shortly afterwards to print another of his sermons, under the title of "God's Providence." The public at once took to these sermons, and by the end of the year about a dozen had thus been issued. This greatly increased his popularity: for many who had not heard him, read those sermons, were interested in them, and soon found opportunity to go and hear him.

The demand for his sermons being considerably greater than for the sermons of other ministers then being published, Mr. Spurgeon made arrangements with the first friend he met in London, who was a printer, and a member of his church, to commence the publication of one sermon of his every week, beginning with the new year, 1855. Providence of God the sermons have appeared continuously, week by week, without interruption, for more than twenty-seven years, until a steady, improving, and large circulation, which is in itself a marked indication of divine favor. No other minister the world has ever known has been able to produce one printed sermon weekly for so many years. The world still goes on with unabated favor and unceasing interest.

The Preacher Described.

The following description of the preacher's style at this period is one of the earliest we have met with: "His voice is clear and musical; his language plain; his style flowing, but terse; his method lucid and orderly; his matter sound and suitable; his tone and spirit cordial; his remarks always pithy and pungent, sometimes familiar and colloquial, yet never light or coarse, much less profane. Judging from a single sermon, we supposed that he would become a plain, faithful, forcible, and affectionate preacher of the gospel in the form called Calvinistic; and our judgment was the more favorable,

because, while there was a solidity beyond his years, we detected little of the wild luxuriance naturally characteristic of very young preachers." Want of order and arrangement was a fault the preacher soon found out himself, and he refers to it when he says: "Once I put all my knowledge together in glorious confusion; but now I have a shelf in my head for everything; and whatever I read or hear I know where to stow it away for use at the proper time."

Intense Interest Excited.

Amongst the multitudes who assembled to hear the popular preacher was a member of the Society of Friends, who, being deeply impressed by what he saw and heard, wrote a lengthened article on the subject. The writer observes: "The crowds which have been drawn to hear him, the interest excited by his ministry, and the conflicting opinions expressed in reference to his qualifications and usefulness, have been altogether without parallel in modern times. It was a relief to see this round-faced country youth thus placed in a position of such solemn and arduous responsibility, yet addressing himself to the fulfilment of its onerous duties with a gravity, self-possession and vigor that proved him well fitted for the task he had assumed."

Within one year, New Park Street Chapel had to be enlarged. During the enlargement, Exeter Hall was taken, and it was filled to overflowing every Sabbath morning to hear the young preacher. The chapel, which had been enlarged to the fullest extent of the ground, was soon found to be far too circumscribed for the thousands who flocked to hear him; and by the end of the summer it became necessary to seek for a much larger place to satisfy the demand of the public.

Twenty-first Birthday.

On the 19th of June, 1855, Mr. Spurgeon came of age, and he improved the occasion by preaching a sermon relating thereto. A large congregation heard it, and it was printed with an excellent likeness of the young preacher, pale and thin as he then was. The sermon was published with the title, "Pictures of Life, and Birthday Reflections." It had a large sale. That was the first portrait of him which had been issued.

At that period the first attempt to issue a penny weekly newspaper was made by Mr. C. W. Banks, and the "Christian Cabinet" was a very spirited publication. The value of a pure and cheap press was fully appreciated by Mr. Spurgeon, who generously furnished articles for the columns of that serial during nearly the whole of its first year's existence. They show a clear and sound judgment on many public events passing more than twenty years ago, and they are the first buddings of that genius which has since ripened so fully, and yielded such an abundant harvest of rich mental food. The books which have since come from Mr. Spurgeon's pen are equally marvellous for their number, variety, and usefulness, and some of them have had most unprecedentedly large sales.

Visit to Scotland.

In July of this year, 1855, he paid his first visit to Scotland, and a lively description of his congregation and preaching was printed in the "Cabinet."

On the bright evening of the 4th of September, Mr. Spurgeon preached to about twelve thousand people in a field in King Edward's Road, Hackney. The sermon was printed under the title of "Heaven and Hell," and had a very large sale, doing at the same time a large amount of good. The sermon was closed by the preacher giving the following account of his own conversion, which had a good effect on his audience, proving that experience is the best teacher. There were thousands of young people present who were astonished at what they heard, and many turned that night from their sins. The preacher said: "I can remember the time when my sins first stared me in the face. I thought myself the most accursed of all men. I had not committed any very great open transgression against God; but I recollected that I had been well trained and tutored, and I thought my sins were thus greater than other people's. I cried to God to have mercy, but I feared that He would not pardon me. Month after month I cried to God, but He did not hear me, and I knew not what it was to be saved. Sometimes I was so weary of the world that I desired to die; but I then recollected that there was a worse world after this, and that it would be an ill matter to rush before my Maker unprepared. At times I wickedly thought God a most heartless tyrant, because He did not answer my prayer; and then at others I thought, 'I deserve His displeasure; if he sends me to hell, He will be just.'

"But I remember the hour when I stepped into a place of worship, and I saw a tall, thin man step into the pulpit: I have never seen him from that day, and probably never shall till we meet in heaven. He opened the Bible, and read with a feeble voice: 'Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside Me there is none else.' Ah! thought I, I am one of the ends of the earth; and then, turning round, and fixing his gaze on me, as if he knew me, the minister said: 'Look, look, look!' Why, I thought I had a great deal to *do*, but I found it was only to *look*. I thought I had a garment to spin out for myself; but I found that if I looked, Christ could give me a garment. Look, sinner, that is the way to be saved. Look unto Him, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved."

Preaching is the ordained means for the salvation of sinners: the power of appeal by the human voice is greater than any other; but there is another influence which is potent. Before Mr. Spurgeon had issued more than half a year's sermons from the press, letters reached him from far-off places recording the good which had been effected by reading them. On one of Mr. Spurgeon's visits to Scotland he was taken to visit Anne Sims, an aged saint living at the Brae of Killiecrankie, far away up the mountains, who had expressed intense delight in reading his sermons, and prayed for his success in the work, little thinking that in her mountain solitude, and in her ninetieth year, she should ever see the preacher himself; whose visit was to her like that of an angel. It would be difficult to chronicle the results which have followed the reading of the sermons.

Tidings of Good Done.

In the first article in "The Sword and the Trowel" for 1872, the editor himself says: "Our ministry has never been without large results in conversion." Twenty conversions have been reported to him by letter in one week. The last Sunday sermon he preached in 1855, with which the first volume of his printed discourses is closed, had special reference to the war in the Crimea, and it commanded a large

sale; its title was, "Healing for the Wounded." It contributed materially to allay public anxiety about the war. Mr. Spurgeon closed the year by holding a Watchnight Service in his chapel. It was a happy and memorable service, and it was afterward repeated at the close of every year; the last hours of the closing year and the first moments of the opening new year being devoted to the worship of God, in acts of personal consecration.

It is a gratifying fact, not generally known, that from the first year of Mr. Spurgeon's ministry in London several clergymen have used his sermons weekly, with a little adaptation, in their own churches. This testimony has been given by the clergymen themselves, in person and by letter, to the writer. Some are using the sermons in that way at the present time, and though delivered second-hand in this manner, yet they are not without fruit.

"LIFE AND WORKS" CHAPTER 4