“Pointing Wayfarers to the Right Road”: Puritan Dissent and the Textual Work of Susannah Spurgeon

by

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Abstract

This dissertation demonstrates the importance of recovering the work of nineteenth-century Dissenting women whose life and writing have been overshadowed and minimized by their husband's pastoral ministry. Specifically, it examines the textual work of Susannah Spurgeon (1832-1903), wife of the celebrated Baptist preacher and author Charles (CH.) Spurgeon, as a lens through which to consider how Dissenting women reimagined the traditional position of the "help-meet" and, in doing so, challenged the established gendered boundaries of theological writing and reform. Through her Book Fund (1875-1903) Spurgeon distributed over two-hundred thousand Puritan books, including titles by her husband, to impoverished ministers across the world. She also wrote two volumes of Fund reports and three devotional texts, all of which remain unexamined in contemporary Victorian, literary, and theological scholarship. In her reports Spurgeon outlines the details of the Fund's operation and the minister's need for preaching material, but she also represents her work as both independent of her husband and extending beyond the traditional boundaries of the nineteenth-century minister's wife. As such, her writing not only challenges the expectations and limitations associated with the "help-meet," but also provides a new set of images through which to re-imagine the ministerial wife's contributions to the "flock." Furthermore, in her reports Spurgeon suggests her work is driven and inspired not only by a "famine" of books among ministers, but also by theological reform: the revival of Puritan doctrine within Dissent. Spurgeon urges Dissenting ministers and churches to return to Puritan theology and also warns, even preaches, against the "evil influences" of contemporary liberal doctrine (*TYA* 120). Drawing on language and imagery from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spurgeon proclaims liberal theology is as spiritually sinful as Bunyan's "surly" Giant (110). In doing so she not only provides doctrinal guidance to her

readers, directing pilgrims to the "right road" of Puritanism, but also simultaneously contributes to a contemporary theological debate, The Down-Grade Controversy, within her Baptist tradition (*TYA* 28). Thus, Spurgeon's representation of her work extends beyond mere contribution to CH. Spurgeon's ministry; her reports perform as her own polemic against heresy and re-frame the position of the "help-meet" as one of both theological defense and reform.

This dissertation also examines how Spurgeon draws on and adapts a Dissenting evangelical tradition of textual representation, one that imbues the Bible and religious texts with divine power. More specifically, to illustrate the spiritual "help" provided by her Fund, Spurgeon idealizes Puritan texts and doctrine as "absolutely necessary" sustenance not only for "hungry" ministers, but *all* godly men and women (*TY* 46). Through this dramatization, of both ministerial poverty and the performance of the book, Spurgeon validates the Puritan texts she distributes, the Book Fund she operates, and the ministerial work she performs. This examination of her life and Fund, therefore, contributes to and nuances the study of Dissenting women's religious work, self-representation, and theological writing.

"You are highly privileged in having parents who pray for you. Your name is known in the courts of heaven. Your case has been heard before the throne of God." - CH. Spurgeon

Mom and Dad, this is for you.

Acknowledgments

When visiting my grandfather, Reverend Peter Teichroeb, his first words when I entered the door were often "I'm so glad you've come by" followed quickly by "have you read this book?" We would make our way to his bookshelves, stacked to the brim, and he would pull a few titles to add to the pile of recommended books for me. My grandmother often kindly interjected, "Peter, I'm sure she has enough to read with all her studies." But I never had enough, not when it was a book from grandpa. Like CH. Spurgeon, my grandfather was a celebrated Baptist preacher and his faith and ministry was shaped by the life and work of Charles. My time with him not only inspired my faith, but also my love for history, for theology, for the Puritans, and for Spurgeon. I thank him for not only introducing me to Charles and Susannah Spurgeon, but also for his, and my grandmother's, tireless support, prayers, and encouragement throughout my life and studies. You are both greatly missed.

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Chapter One:
Re-framing the "help-meet": The Context and Recovery of Spurgeon's Life and Work

> Mrs. Charles Haddon Spurgeon seems to have begun to live only when her existence came first within the orbit of that wonderful personality [Charles Spurgeon] by which it was destined thenceforward to be inspired and absorbed. ~ Chappell

While in the library of Charles (CH) Spurgeon (1834-1892), the eminent nineteenth-century Baptist minister and author, Susannah Spurgeon (1832-1903) observed "the twenty-seven goodly volumes of printed 'Sermons'" preached by her husband and her "heart blessed God" not only for the spoken words, but for "all they shall yet accomplish" in written form (Spurgeon *Ten Years* 206).[1] CH. Spurgeon was, and continues to be, known as "the most famous and most popular Baptist, not only in Britain, but in the entire world" (Larsen 247).[2] For the 37 years Charles preached in London he had "the largest congregation in the world" and "many consider [CH.] Spurgeon one of the ten greatest English authors with an estimate of up to 300 million copies of his sermons and books printed" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 62, Drummond 25).[3] However, Spurgeon's appreciation of her husband's published sermons reflects not only her

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[1] All future references to Charles Spurgeon will be as "CH. Spurgeon" or "Charles." References to Susannah Spurgeon will be noted as "Spurgeon."

[2] CH. Spurgeon's popularity is difficult to overstate. He preached up to "thirteen times per week and sold approximately 56,025,000 sermons throughout his ministry" (George 3). The sermons were distributed worldwide and translated into nearly forty languages including German, Gaelic, Swedish, Welsh, and Portuguese (George 3). CH. Spurgeon was known as one of the "lions of London" and his preaching attracted "not only the prime minister, William Gladstone, but, according to legend, Queen Victoria also heard Spurgeon preach by attending the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall disguised in pedestrian garb" (George 4). It was said that every American going to England "went with the ambition to see Shakespeare's tomb and Charles Spurgeon" (Larson 253). Even Vincent van Gogh, before becoming an impressionist painter, "found inspiration from [CH.] Spurgeon's sermons and sought to become an evangelical preacher" (George 5).

[3] While waiting for his church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, to be built CH. Spurgeon rented the Surrey Gardens Music Hall with over 12,000 people in attendance for each service. He also spoke at the Crystal Palace with over 23,000 in attendance, as many as could be within range of his voice (Larson 251). His voice contributed to his fame and was celebrated as the "most excellent of voices" with "perfect control…there is poetry in every feature" (Magoon xxvii).

recognition of the success of his sermons, but, specifically, what the books will "accomplish." In response to her observation of "a serious book-famine" among Dissenting ministers in England who were thus unable to "feed the flock of God" Spurgeon established Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund (1875) (*TY* 234, 8, 31).[4] Through the Fund she distributed the "heavenly manna" of her husband's books to ministers for the benefit of their pulpit preparation and personal faith (*TY* 204). The demand led to distribution of a variety of texts, primarily Puritan works, and beyond Dissenting ministers to clergy of the Church of England, lay preachers, and missionaries worldwide.[5] [6] From the early days of the Fund Spurgeon composed monthly reports of the progress of her work, initially published in CH. Spurgeon's Baptist periodical *The Sword and the Trowel* (1865), and later collected in two volumes: *Ten Years of My Life In the Service of the Book Fund: Being a Grateful Record of My Experience of the Lord's Ways, And Work, And Wages* (1885) and *Ten Years After!: A Sequel To 'Ten Years of My Life in the Service of the Book Fund'* (1895). The reports include not only records of the number of texts distributed, but also hundreds of letters from ministers and missionaries who received books from the Fund, as

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[4] Throughout this dissertation I use the term "Dissent" to refer to Protestants who disassociated themselves from the established Church of England. The origins of the separation are rooted in the seventeenth century. The Toleration Act of 1689 "confirmed the separation between Church and 'Dissent'" and the sects or denominations within Dissent "enjoyed legally protected freedom of worship, even as their members remained second-class citizens, excluded from public office" (Noll xvii). Both "Nonconformist" and "Dissent" are often used interchangeably; however, in line with recent scholarship, specifically the seminal five volume *Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions*, I rely upon "Dissent." As Mark Noll explains in the collection's introduction, "'Dissenting Studies' is a recognized and flourishing field of academic studies, focused on the history of those Protestant movements that coalesced as Dissenting denominations in the seventeenth century and on the New Dissent that arose outside the established church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (xx).

[5] The term "Puritan" emerged in the 1560s as a "pejorative nickname" for Protestants who wished to continue the reformation "beyond the compromise of the established Elizabethan Protestant church, which retained government by bishops and a liturgy modelled on that of Rome" ("Puritanism"). The Puritans sought to "recover the purity of doctrine, simplicity of worship, commitment of ministry, and integrity of faith" which they believed characterized the first three Christian centuries prior to the ascendancy of the church of Rome and the "corrupt[ion] of the Christian gospel" ("Puritanism").

[6] See Appendices 2 and 3 for charts of the titles distributed by the Fund. The Puritan texts distributed include those of the English Puritan tradition from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century (such as works by Thomas Watson (1620-1688), Matthew Henry (1662-1714), and Richard Baker (1568-1645)) and nineteenth-century texts that espouse Puritan theology.

well as moments of trial and tribulation in Spurgeon's work and faith. In addition to managing and operating the Book Fund and writing her two collections of reports, Spurgeon also edited, compiled, and wrote portions of her husband's widely published four volume autobiography, *CH. Spurgeon's Autobiography* (1889-1900), and penned three devotional texts.[7] Despite the success and longevity of her Fund (active for over twenty years) and her five published texts, Spurgeon's life, and particularly her textual work, remains obscure; she is known only as "Mrs. CH. Spurgeon," wife of a celebrated preacher.

I. Beyond a "supporting ministry": The Recovery of Susannah Spurgeon

Of the limited references to Spurgeon's life most appear in biographies of CH. Spurgeon and consist primarily of borrowed sections from *CH. Spurgeon's Autobiography* and Spurgeon's two Book Fund texts. Aside from the biographies, only five other texts discuss Spurgeon's life and work: a short biography, *The Life of Susannah Spurgeon* by Charles Ray, written one month after her death (1903), a chapter in Jennie Chappell's *Women Who Have Worked and Won* (1904), a brief chapter of Ruth Tucker's text, *First Ladies of the Parish: Historical Portraits of Pastors' Wives* (1988), a short outline of her life by Don Theobald (2003) included in a reprint of Spurgeon's devotional text *A Cluster of Camphire,* and the first contemporary biography of Spurgeon, *Susie: The Life and Legacy of Susannah Spurgeon* (2018) by Ray Rhodes Jr. Though the texts are not focused on the ministry of CH. Spurgeon, all five authors represent Spurgeon's life through her position and duties as a minister's wife.

In the first reference to Spurgeon after her death Ray introduces her as "the lady who would be a true 'help-meet' to the popular preacher" (122). He mentions Spurgeon's Book Fund

[7] *A Basket of Summer Fruit* (1901), *A Carillon of Bells to Ring out the Old Truths of Free Grace and Dying Love*, and *A Cluster of Camphire* (1898).

work, though much of the material is directly copied from Spurgeon's published reports and her life is shaped through references to her position as "a preacher's wife" (121). In her examination of four women who worked for "Jesus Christ," Chappell not only refers to Spurgeon as a woman of "wifely devotion," but as a figure who had no identity whatsoever until her marriage: "Mrs. Charles Haddon Spurgeon seems to have begun to live only when her existence came first within the orbit of that wonderful personality [CH. Spurgeon]" (29, 9). However, once she became his help-meet, Chappell suggests Spurgeon's life was not her own and was "thenceforward" completely "absorbed" by CH. Spurgeon's "wonderful personality" (9). The Book Fund is referenced with large quotations from Spurgeon's reports, though, unsurprisingly, most of the forty pages focus on Spurgeon's early married life and her "faithfully fulfilled" work as "a pastor's wife" (Chappell 28). Likewise, Tucker's examination of Spurgeon, who she reminds us is "the wife of one of the most famous Baptist preachers of all time," briefly references Spurgeon's Fund; however, it is quickly defined as "a supporting ministry" for Charles's work as he was "clearly the luminary in the household" (110, 114). Like the previous two texts, Spurgeon's life and work is presented primarily through her efforts to "support her husband in his ministry" (113). Theobald's brief outline of Spurgeon introduces her as CH. Spurgeon's "greatest earthly blessing" and much of the chapter, relying heavily on Ray's text and the *Autobiography*, focuses on Spurgeon's early life and her role as Charles's "partner…and his spiritual soul-mate" (133). The few pages that examine her work remind readers of her "active part in her husband's…ministry" with a passing reference to "The Pastor's Book Fund," completely omitting Spurgeon's name from the Fund she established (150, 152). The publishers of a 2006 reprinting of her devotional text *Free Grace and Dying Love* observe that "while much is known about Susannah Spurgeon's famous husband C.H. Spurgeon, comparatively little is

known about [Susannah]" (back cover). The reprinting suggests contemporary interest in her work; however, the publishers simultaneously contribute to her obscurity by continuing to represent her as Charles's appendage: "the woman who supported the great preacher through the many years of his long and fruitful ministry" (back cover). In 2018 the first contemporary biography of Spurgeon was published by an American pastor, Ray Rhodes Jr. The text, both devotional and historical, provides previously unexamined biographical records and history of Spurgeon's life. Rhodes recognizes Spurgeon's extensive work has thus far been overshadowed by her "famous husband" (237). However, like the editors of her reprinted work, his representation of Spurgeon continues to define her life, and even her "legacy," not by her independent textual work, but by her position as wife to Charles. This is exemplified by his claim that "Susie's greatest legacy was not through the Book Fund, nor was it church planting…nor was it the books that she authored. Her greatest legacy is her ministry to and love for her beloved husband" (248).

Thus, it may be argued that Spurgeon was, and continues to be, somewhat unfortunately, known only as the "help-meet" of Charles Spurgeon. Yet, aside from the thirty-one pages in *CH. Spurgeon's Autobiography* that outline her early relationship and marriage to Charles, Spurgeon rarely references herself, or her work, as "help" for her husband's ministry. It is as if her life has, thus far, been examined through these thirty-one pages, ignoring her five other written volumes altogether. Due to this narrow representation her work has remained unexamined in contemporary Victorian, literary, or even theological scholarship. She has no entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and is mentioned only in one sentence of her husband's: "Susannah was closely involved in [CH.] Spurgeon's work despite long spells of ill health from

1868" (Chadwick).[8] Her twenty years operating an international Book Fund, distributing texts around the globe, and her multivolume reports and devotional texts minimized as work alongside, and for, her husband. This dissertation seeks to recover Spurgeon's life and reconsider her work as not merely a "supporting ministry" of Charles Spurgeon, but rather as the independent textual, theological, and ministerial work of a Dissenting woman writer.

II. The Agency of the Dissenting Woman and Puritan Text: Dissertation Argument

I argue Spurgeon represents her work as both independent of her husband and extending beyond the traditional boundaries of the nineteenth-century minister's wife. Thus, her life and writing not only challenges, but also re-imagines the position of the "help-meet." In her Book Fund reports Spurgeon suggests her work is driven and inspired not by Charles, but by ministerial and theological reform; the revival and defense of Puritan doctrine within Dissent. As such, her portrayal of her Book Fund is centred upon a strategic Dissenting, evangelical representation of godly books: divine agents imbued with powers of conversion and conviction. In her reports the distributed Puritan texts perform not only as preaching aids, but as "spiritual food" and inspired works that carry "God's blessing," instruction, and provision to "book hungry" ministers (*TYA* 43, *TY* 71). Through this dramatization, of both ministerial poverty and the performance of the book, Spurgeon validates the Puritan texts and doctrine she distributes, the Book Fund she operates, and the ministerial work she performs (*TYA* 77).

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[8] Throughout her adult life Spurgeon struggled with various illnesses and significant pain. In 1868, at just 32 years of age, an operation was performed "under the direction of the distinguished surgeon, Sir James Simpson, of Edinburgh" (Chappell 29). The surgery was apparently successful, though for the remainder of her life Spurgeon could not travel with Charles and was often in extensive pain, unable to leave the home. Yet she managed to establish her Fund, prepare and distribute thousands of books, and write numerous reports over twenty years, many of which she notes were often "accomplished in a sick chamber" (*TY* 275).

a. Re-defining the "help-meet": Spurgeon's Ministerial Model

First, I argue Spurgeon's life and writing challenges the traditional boundaries of the Dissenting ministerial wife's position and, therefore, her work provides a revised model of the contribution and agency possible for ministerial partners. Representations of women's work in late nineteenth-century evangelical Dissent are traditionally defined by her role within the home, as mother and wife, and or, her godly contributions to the church as religious teacher, philanthropist, or missionary.[9] [10] Though perceived notions of women's nature, both her weakness and spiritual strength, restricted her to a domestic position within the home historians suggest the "religious voluntarism that is characteristic of Dissent" allowed some women to be "active agents in the reform and regeneration of the nation" (Williams 462). Therefore, many Dissenting women engaged in religious work outside the home, such as teaching children and caring for the poor or ill through philanthropic and missionary endeavours. Such work was still,

[9] Most Dissenting traditions, aside from Unitarianism but including Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists, embraced evangelical principles (further examined in chapter two) and their beliefs typically "derived from an Evangelical worldview" (Bebbington 3). Baptist theology is also inspired by and reflective of Puritan ideals. Baptists trace their beginnings to "the Anabaptists and to the ministry of the English Puritan John Smyth (1554–1612)" (Bowker).

[10] Studies of nineteenth-century women's position and work within society recognize the evangelical influence upon gender ideals, particularly in relation to apparent restrictions placed upon women's work outside the home. The seminal work of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (1987), proposes that nineteenth-century men and women of the middle class employed evangelicalism as an ideology to establish their own distinctive moral autonomy. By 1850 a particular "definition of domesticity…became foundational to middle-class identity" (Williams 454). Namely, the woman as "guardian of the spiritual welfare of her family…confined within the private domestic sphere and excluded from the corrupting influence of the competitive public sphere of the male" (454). The separate spheres paradigm has shaped, and to some degree continues to shape, representations of nineteen-century women's roles. However, gender historians note "this argument has been subject to substantive criticism" (455). Numerous studies have shown that many Protestant women challenged this confinement both spiritually and vocationally (455). Yet, women's religious work, particularly within nineteenth-century Dissent, is traditionally represented as an extension of her domestic role as spiritual guide and caregiver. As such, she worked primarily within the realms of philanthropy, religious teaching or writing (for children or in genres limited to devotional or hymn writing), and missions; her contributions directed only to children, the poor or ill, and the unsaved.

to some degree, "defined by [women's] traditional role as nurturers" (Styler 10).[11] The position and work of Dissenting ministerial and missionary wives is similarly understood; however, their activities rarely extended beyond the chapel or field in which their husband's ministered.[12] More specifically, the Dissenting minister's wife's position is traditionally defined by her relationship with and submission to her pastoral husband.

The minister's wife is commonly described, in both nineteenth-century writing and contemporary scholarship, as the preacher's "help-meet."[13] Though the term has been widely used in reference to nineteenth-century women's domestic role, it is often representative of the minister's wife's life and work in both the home and church. As such, she is to "help" her husband, both in the sense of submitting to and supporting him at home and in his ministry. Her work outside the home was, therefore, defined not only by "suitable" fields for her gender, but also by her responsibility to her husband's ministry. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ministers' wives and daughters were expected "to assist in the pastoral work of the parishes, especially Sunday schools, and philanthropic work, and work with women" (Jacob 159). The minister's wife's work was traditionally limited to her husband's church and often only directed towards children or the "religious council…of her own sex" (Boyd 11). Thus, her role and labour outside the home was defined by her innate "tenderness and compassion" (Jacob 159).

[11] Historian Alison Twells relies on the phrase "missionary domesticity" to describe Dissenting women's missionary and social work. She recognizes such work is traditionally understood as an extension of maternal traits (quoted in Williams 462).

[12] Nineteenth-century missionary wives were celebrated for "carrying the benefits of a godly home to the remote parts of the earth and for civilizing all those within their sphere of influence" (Williams 464).

[13] The phrase corresponds to Genesis 2:18: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (*King James Version*). The OED notes the phrase is a compound of two terms, "help" and "meet," the latter is an adjective meaning "suitable." The compound was recognized as a word "chiefly of the nineteenth century" signalling the popularity of the phrase in connection to nineteenth-century representations of women. The term later became known as "helpmate" ("Helpmate").

Aside from accounts by missionary wives there are few published records of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministers' wives' life and ministry.[14] Their contributions are often only noted in the minister's biography and rarely published independently. As such there is limited scholarship available, much of which affirms the traditional assumption that ministerial wives' work was "limited to work among women and children" (Robert 18).[15] Historians note nineteenth-century ministers' wives have "their own advice literature," referencing the 1832 manual *Hints To A Clergyman's Wife,* though few discuss the text in detail (Styler 10). However, I argue the anonymous work is significant to the study of nineteenth-century representations of ministerial wives' life and work.[16] The text, as a conduct book, outlines the ideal or expected character and duties of the minister's wife.[17] Though not all ministers' wives necessarily followed such expectations, the text provides further insight into the contemporary

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[14] Dissenting missionary accounts written by women include those such as the work of Baptist missionary Mrs. Murray Mitchell (1820-1907), *A Missionary's Wife Among the Wild Tribes of South Bengal* (1871) and the Presbyterian missionary wife Maggie Whitecross Paton (1841-1905), *Letters and Sketches From The New Hebrides* (1894), edited by her Brother-in-Law, Rev. Jas. Paton. Dissenting ministerial wives' accounts are further limited, though some unexamined records exist, such as Mrs. Sherman's *The Pastor's Wife. A Memoir of Mrs. Sherman* (1850). Though the text includes many letters by Sherman it was compiled and written by her husband, James Sherman, minister of Surrey Chapel. Mrs. Sherman performed and arranged a variety of ministries at her husband's chapel, including a Sabbath Bible Class for young women and a "Maternal Association" instructing young mothers how to raise children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (82). Though she worked both alongside and independent of her husband her work remained within the traditional realm of teaching and visiting women in the local chapel.

[15] Leonard Sweet's text, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role In Nineteenth-century American Evangelicalism* (1983), is one of few dedicated to ministerial wives. He proposes the position and work of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century ministerial wives may be examined through four models: Companion ("helpmeet"), Sacrificer, Assistant, and Partner (3). Each model entails different restrictions and expectations. The Companion model represents women who had no public involvement or visibility, whereas the Partner model applies to wives who worked with their husband and developed their own ministries (5). Though Sweet recognizes all ministerial wives' work does not fit neatly within the traditional "help-meet," each of the proposed models suggests her life and work is defined only in relation to her husband. He notes some wives performed work independent of their husbands, but confirms the traditional assumption that such work is limited to her local parish and or dedicated only to women and children.

[16] Hints is directed at wives of "clergymen" within the Church of England; however, the texts nevertheless provides a helpful frame of reference for Dissenting ministerial wives.

[17] In 1848 the *Christian Lady's Magazine* celebrated *Hints* declaring "we strongly recommend this little book" for it "will afford many valuable hints to clergymen's wives, or any other Christian ladies, engaged in parochial visiting" (91). The review further legitimizes the text, from the perspective of the nineteenth-century woman, as an ideal representation of ministerial wives' work.

definition of their work, one through which we might compare the published accounts of ministerial wives, such as Susannah Spurgeon.

In the text's preface the author suggests the book will provide a "general view of the duties incumbent upon a clergyman's wife" with "hints" related to both her "personal character" and her "female…duties" within the church or chapel (1, vii, 11). First, the author defines the minister's wife's position and duties in relation to her husband. Any parochial work she performs is of a "subordinate nature" for, "the more sacred" obligations, such as the preaching and "ministration of the Word," rest only "upon the Minister" (vi, 1).[18] Second, any of her contributions ought to be motivated by "affection for her husband, and the desire of advancing his important work" (12). Therefore, the minister's wife will dedicate herself to the needs of her husband and "his flock," but "without obtruding herself on the duties which belong to the Minister of Christ" (124). As such, she will be "a fellow-helper to the Gospel" and "a help-meet to her husband" (124). The author emphasizes wives' expected work is defined by and limited to "that department of duty for which the female sex is more peculiarly adapted" (vi). Namely, "Christian charity and benevolence" (12). Her "general spirit of kindness, conciliation, and love" as well as her natural "maternal solicitude" prepares her for such work (23). Though the minister's wife will join her husband in many activities, such as visitations, she may also take on "independent plans of operation" (2). Such work, however, includes only "schemes of usefulness for which her sex more peculiarly adapts her" (2). Therefore, when working independently of her husband she is limited to "the humblest offices of Christian benevolence," directed at "young people, (more especially of the females)" (6-7, 123). Her activities might include "comfort[ing]…the aged," visiting the sick, reading the Bible to those unable to attend

[18] 1 Tim. 4:13 suggests the minister's duty is to read the Scriptures and "exhort[…]" the Word and doctrine (*King James Version*).

chapel, and giving "advice and assistance" to the young through "Sunday school" and "private instruction" (6, 4). Her charitable endeavours should be performed with "tenderness" and "kind encouragement" and, the author repeatedly emphasizes, such work must be "confined only to females" (123, 4).[19] Although she may perform a variety of charitable activities outside the home, the minister's wife remains "guardian and director" of the "domestic circle" (40). Alongside her work within the church or chapel she is also responsible for the "management of her family," ensuring her "household" illustrates Christian values and is "subordinated" to the needs of the minister (36).

The manual suggests ministerial wives were expected to work outside the home and to contribute to their husband's ministry through both shared duties and their own "independent operations." Such instruction suggests ministerial wives embraced some degree of agency, perhaps more than those who were not married to ministers. However, their "independent" work was only independent in the sense that they worked without their husband's immediate direction. Such work was still expected to be performed for the benefit of the local chapel and only within the realm of Christian charity, corresponding to their maternal nature, directed at women. As "help-meet" her life and contributions within and outside the home were subordinate to her husband and his flock for by "uniting herself to a Christian minister, she has bound herself to his work" (59). The contemporary representations of Spurgeon's life and work echo both the language and expectations of the manual. Ray recognizes Spurgeon's Book Fund as a "new plan[.] of Christian effort" though he is quick to confirm it must also be considered "nothing more than a legitimate part of her husband's ministry" (121). Chappell celebrates Spurgeon as

[19] The author adds that although the "Clergyman's wife…will feel interested in the well-being of every individual in her husband's parish" she must ensure she does not "overstep the bounds of her own department" and focus only on the "*female* part of it" (115-16).

"an ideal pastor's wife"; not in recognition of her twenty years of Fund work, but rather, of her "intense love for her husband," her work at home "teaching her darling children" and her work with young women (28). She notes Spurgeon assisted "female candidates for baptism" by providing "council, cheer," and advice (28-29). *Hints* likewise confirms ministerial wives ought to assist young women in relation to activities of "confirmation," such as baptism, for they can provide "maternal and affectionate instruction" and help with cases of "female bashfulness and timidity" (122). Though the accounts of Spurgeon's life were written nearly twenty five years after *Hints* they suggest nineteenth-century expectations and representations of ministerial wives' work were still shaped by the ideals of the "help-meet." Celebrating Spurgeon's maternal nature and charitable work with women and, her independent work, when recognized, is defined only as an extension of her husband's ministry.

Spurgeon's representation of her own life and work, however, not only challenges the traditional expectations and limitations associated with the "help-meet," but also provides a new set of images through which to re-imagine the ministerial wife's contributions to the "flock". Although her Book Fund distributes Charles's texts, in her reports Spurgeon portrays both herself and her Fund as independent of her husband's ministry. She distributes Puritan texts not merely to support Charles's work, but to further her own mission of ministerial and theological reform. As such, Spurgeon's self-representation is shaped by three inter-related images through which she presents her work as a Dissenting ministerial wife. Throughout her reports she suggests she embraces not the role of a "help-meet," but rather, a "supplier" of textual nourishment, a "nursing-mother" of ministers and a "finger-post" of theological guidance (*TY* 242, 378, *TYA* 28). Each image, examined below and subsequently in the following three chapters, illustrates Spurgeon's contribution to Dissenting faith and her model of ministerial

work. A model through which she re-shapes the traditional nature and limitations of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministerial wives' work.

In her Book Fund reports Spurgeon portrays the Puritan texts she distributes as agents of mental nourishment, direction, and instruction for "starving" ministers who cannot afford books.[20] Through this framework of sustenance, examined in chapter two, Spurgeon validates the work of the Fund and her position as an essential "suppl[ier]" or purveyor of textual nourishment (*TY* 242). Traditionally, ministerial wives were expected to perform "Christian charity and benevolence" by providing the "naked…clothing," the "starving…nourishment," the "sick…consolation" (*Hints* 12). By representing her textual distribution as a form of charitable "feeding" Spurgeon re-imagines the philanthropic work of the minister's wife. Such work may, in fact, take a variety of forms and respond not only to the material, but also intellectual, even theological needs of the flock. As noted above, nineteenth-century Dissenting women's religious work, whether missions or charity, was primarily, if not always, limited to activities with and for other women.[21] Spurgeon's work, however, is directed not to needy women or children, but, rather, to hungry *men.* Furthermore, her texts are sent to godly ministers in positions of spiritual authority. Though she does not suggest women ought to minister to men, her work nevertheless challenges the established limitations of the ministerial wife's position and implies her contributions may benefit *all* saints. Furthermore, her work as a "supplier" is not defined by or portrayed as a part of her husband's ministry nor limited to her husband's congregation. Her Book Fund distributes CH. Spurgeon's texts, and other Puritan works, not for the benefit of his

[20] In chapter three, section titled "Ministerial Hunger and the Defense Against Heresy," I provide further historical context to Spurgeon's portrayal of ministerial hunger, specifically the financial and theological hardship of nineteenth-century Dissenting preachers.

[21] Dissenting women visited and cared for poor, sick, and imprisoned men and women; however, their charity rarely focused only upon the opposite sex. The work of Felicia Skene (1821-1899), Anglican writer and prison reformer, provides a rare example of a nineteenth-century woman whose philanthropic visitation was primarily with men.

ministry or flock, but rather, the ministry of all preachers and churches, even beyond Dissent. As such Spurgeon challenges the established boundaries of ministerial wives' work, signalling that her influence and contribution may and perhaps, ought to, extend beyond women of her local chapel.

Second, Spurgeon represents her work through the maternal image of a "nursing-mother" (*TY* 378). She draws not on her own experience as mother, but rather, on Puritan ministerial language. Much of the expected duties and work of the nineteenth-century ministerial wife is defined by her "maternal solicitude" and perceived innate tenderness (*Hints* 23). Traditionally she is expected to "act the part of a mother amongst her husband's people" (40). She does so by encouraging "humility, self-denial," and "charity" amongst her "husband's flock" (41). Through her self-defining image of "nursing-mother" Spurgeon re-frames the ministerial wife's maternal position as one of spiritual feeding. She describes her provision of Puritan texts to ministers as the work of a mother, caring for pastoral "children" by feeding and providing for God's shepherds (*TY* 378). Puritan representations of ministerial work, examined in chapter three, commonly rely on maternal language and imagery. Drawing on biblical representations of the "milk" of the Scriptures, the seventeenth-century minister is portrayed as a spiritual mother who feeds his congregation from the "breasts" of the Word (Leverenz 1). Spurgeon's Baptist tradition, her Fund's work, and her Calvinist doctrine are entrenched in Puritan ideals and language.[22] Within this context her self-description draws not on traditional domesticity, but on pastoral provision. Signalling that the minister's wife may not only support, or be subordinate to, the minister's "sacred obligation" of preaching the gospel, but she might also, in her own

[22] The Puritans embraced and defended the doctrine of Reformed theology, strongly rooted in Calvinism. This theological tradition emphasizes the "primacy of Scripture over church tradition," as well as the sovereignty of God, predestination, and justification through faith (Wallace 206).

way, contribute to the congregation's nourishment. Furthermore, by borrowing an established Puritan representation of masculine pastoral work Spurgeon continues to adapt, even challenge, the traditional gendered boundaries or "schemes of usefulness" for Dissenting pastoral wives.

Third, drawing on imagery of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spurgeon portrays herself and her Fund as a "finger-post" of guidance for "wayward" Dissenters (*TYA* 28). Nineteenth-century representations of both the minister's and his wife's work are traditionally focused upon the "the spiritual welfare of...[the] parish" (*Hints* 5). The minister directs and guides his congregation through "more serious and intelligent…truths" while the minister's wife provides spiritual "advice" to women or simple teachings to the young (5, 6, 115). Spurgeon declares her work has a similar aim; the distributed Puritan texts provide "a mine of spiritual help," "comforting" and "guiding" ministers and their people (*TYA* 116). She, therefore, suggests she herself embodies the role of a "finger-post," guiding ministers and readers of her reports. The direction she provides, however, is not only spiritual, but doctrinal. Spurgeon declares the aim of her Fund is the "dissemination of *sound* doctrine…of the Puritan faith" (*TYA* 245; italics original). She provides such doctrine through Puritan texts, but also through her own theological teaching in her reports. Through her writing she not only guides Dissenters to Puritan truth, but also directs them away from contemporary heretical doctrine. She also notes that her writing and textual distribution are rooted in theological study. She records that she spent hours with her husband as he prepared for sermons, supporting him and, significantly, reading texts alongside him. She confirms that through such "instructive and spiritually helpful" study she was "introduced to…the Puritan…divines" (*Autobiography* 4.70, 4.68). Many of whose works she would later distribute to ministers, confident that the books would provide them with the knowledge and spiritual benefits she herself received. Despite her qualifications and knowledge, she proposes

her theological writing is merely devotional, though, as I argue in chapter four, her "stories" *perform* as sermonic exhortations. Through her self-described work as a "finger-post" of "guidance" Spurgeon challenges the boundaries of nineteenth-century women's theological writing and the minister's wife's work; she too might also disseminate "serious truths." Though not from the pulpit, Spurgeon suggests her work contributes to the spiritual, even doctrinal, stability of all pilgrims.

As "help meet" the nineteenth-century minister's wife is considered "a…silent auxiliary" dedicated to "advancing [her husband's] important work" (*Hints* 27, 12). Spurgeon's three part self-representation reframes the work and role of the minister's wife; a position not only of subservience or "help" but of provision, nourishment, and spiritual direction. Her duties are defined not by gender or benevolence, but by her desire and ability to provide sound theological, even doctrinal guidance. Representing her work as comparable to the Puritan minister or John Bunyan's ministerial character, Evangelist, Spurgeon signals the minister's wife's work, whether visiting or exhorting, is equally "important" and beneficial to the flock.

b. The Dissenting Woman as an Agent of Theological Reform

CH. Spurgeon's faith, writing, and preaching was inspired and defined by Puritan, Reformed theology. He declared the "daily labour" of his ministry was to "revive the old doctrines" of the seventeenth-century Puritans (Ella). Many of the Puritan ideals at the heart of mid to late nineteenth-century Dissenting evangelical theology, particularly within the Baptist tradition, were challenged by numerous emerging liberal teachings. Modern scientific discoveries and modes of biblical interpretation opposed traditional ideas of creation and the Bible's inspiration and infallibility. As Dissenting preachers adapted their theology and embraced liberal principles Charles Spurgeon preached a return to the Word-centred, Calvinist

theology of the Puritan era.[23] Throughout the following three chapters I argue that Spurgeon, through her Book distribution and written reports, also sought to "revive" Puritan doctrine within Dissent. Her Fund operates within and responds to this period of theological instability characterized by a growing rejection of Reformed Puritan doctrine. As such, her Book Fund seeks not only to assist poor ministers in sermon preparation, but to influence and direct their doctrine and their congregation's faith through the "savoury meat" of books "of the Puritan faith" (*TY* 346, *TYA* 245). Spurgeon represents her Fund as an agent of Puritan evangelization, declaring "Scriptural, Puritanic theology alone goes forth from the Book Fund shelves" (*TY* 28). Throughout her reports she declares Puritan books, and theology, are "sound doctrine" and "the richest…nourishment" for starving ministers and their flock (*TYA* 28). She therefore ensures that Puritan doctrine is disseminated from Dissenting mission fields and pulpits.

Furthermore, as I argue in chapter four, Spurgeon not only urges a return to Puritan theology, but also warns, even preaches, against the "evil influences" of liberal doctrine (*TYA* 120). Drawing on language and imagery from *Pilgrim's Progress,* the work of the revered Dissenter John Bunyan (1628-88), Spurgeon proclaims liberal teachings are as spiritually diabolical and sinful as Bunyan's "grim and surly" Giant (110). In doing so she not only provides doctrinal guidance to her readers, as a "finger-post" directing pilgrims to the "right road" of Puritanism, but simultaneously contributes to a contemporary theological debate within her own Baptist tradition (*TYA* 28). Thus, Spurgeon's representation of her work and position extends beyond mere contribution to CH. Spurgeon's ministry; her reports perform as her own polemic against heresy and re-frame the position of the "help-meet" as one of both theological defense and reform.

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[23] The liberal doctrines are defined and examined later in this chapter and in chapter two, "Dissenting Liberalism and the Context of Spurgeon's Fund."

c. "God-given power" of the Puritan Text

In her ministerial position and work of theological reform I argue Spurgeon relies not on her husband, but on the inspired agency she attributes to the Puritan text. More specifically, to illustrate the "spiritual help" provided by Puritan books and her Fund Spurgeon draws on and adapts a Dissenting tradition of textual representation that imbues the Bible and religious texts with divine power (*TYA* 116). In doing so she idealizes Puritan texts, and doctrine, as "absolutely necessary" sustenance and guidance not only for ministers, but *all* godly men and women (*TY* 46).

In the Book Fund reports Spurgeon describes the Puritan books she distributes to missionaries and ministers; however, she rarely provides titles, a summary of a text's contents, or material details, such as price or length. Spurgeon represents texts not based upon their form or content, but rather, what the text will *do.* Her two volumes of reports are saturated with references to what the distributed texts will provide, the apparent forms they take, where they will travel, how they will perform upon readers, what gifts they will impart, and transformations they will inspire. The books sent from the Fund are not merely commentaries on the Bible or theological studies, but, they are also "messengers…with God-given power and unction" (*TYA* 23). The prevailing metaphor throughout the reports is one of sustenance: the book is "heavenly manna," "mental food," "nourishment for [ministers'] brains," and "food to a hungry soul" (*TY* 204, 31, 46, 164). In all cases Spurgeon represents Puritan texts as capable of such performances and transformations because, as she suggests, "the Lord's blessing rest[s] on the books sent out in His name" (*TY* 75). Spurgeon's representation of Puritan texts is, in part, inspired by and reflective of nineteenth-century evangelical ideas of textuality.

Isabel Hofmeyr's work on seventeenth and nineteenth-century textual distribution and missions argues nineteenth-century Evangelicals attributed seemingly divine "force and influence" to religious texts of sound doctrine ("Inventing" 22, 21). Hofmeyr classifies this evangelical representation of texts as "inspired textual agency" ("Inventing" 27). Such agency is typically applied to "the Bible and religious tracts" through language and metaphors that anthropomorphize the texts as "mini-missionaries which could travel by themselves and seize those they encountered" ("Realism" 125, "Books in Heaven" 141). Like the Bible, the texts embody a divine power that allows them to function as "instruments" of conversion (C. Brown 9). This form of textuality carries a set of metaphors and images, many of which are familiar to Spurgeon's nineteenth-century Dissenting readers, that represent religious books as divine extensions of God and "repositories of the Holy Spirit's living presence" (C. Brown 130). As discussed in chapter two, this portrayal of texts as messengers and "surrogate evangelists" is primarily evident in the context of missionary work through the reports of the Religious Tract Society's (RTS) distribution of tracts, Bibles, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 69). The RTS, the largest Dissenting tract distribution organization, proclaimed that a religious tract was "an evangelising agent among a heathen people" and these "silent preachers" could convert any who encountered it (*Proceedings* 157, *Eighty-First* 419).

Like the RTS, Spurgeon represents the texts distributed by the Fund as "silent messengers" and "little ambassadors" that perform the work of conversion, saving" perishing sinner[s]" in "distant heathen lands" (*TY* 70, *TYA* 23, *TY* 302). However, as I argue in chapter two, Spurgeon nuances and adapts this tradition of textual agency for her own purpose. First, she presents a particular set of texts as embodying this textual agency; not all religious books are agents of God. Aside from the Bible or biblical tracts, it is only Puritan literature, texts

associated with the established Puritan tradition, including her husband's works, that Spurgeon represents as divine "messengers of salvation and peace" (*TYA* 70). Second, she nuances both the receiver and the agent. In the reports, Puritan texts perform not only as objects of salvation directed towards the ungodly, but as agents of sustenance for those already saved, specifically ministers. She therefore signals that such inspired texts are necessary not only for conversion, but also for developing and maintaining godliness. Finally, she extends the performance and influence of the text; it is not only represented as an agent of conversion, but of diverse "God-given power" (*TY* 128). Puritan books feed, as "a mouthful of…meat," protect, as "ammunition for combat," and heal as a "heavenly cordial" (*TY* 399, *TY* 71, *TYA* 23).

Though Spurgeon's dramatic portrayal of Puritan books reflects contemporary representations of the agency of books and tracts, I suggest she also strategically draws on a long tradition of Dissenting textual agency that has roots in seventeenth-century, Puritan modes of biblical textuality.[24] The power she attributes to Puritan texts is reflective of Bunyan's dramatic portrayal of the Bible in *Grace Abounding* - the book with "arms of grace so wide" that "boulted" and "looked" upon him (159, 132, 166). Her metaphors of sustenance are also drawn from Puritan preachers' illustrations of the Scriptures as "sincere milk" (Cotton *Practical Commentary* 338), "bread to strengthen you" and "a honey-comb to feast you" (Brooks *Apples* 212). As argued in chapter three, Spurgeon draws on the language and metaphors of the Puritan tradition, particularly from writers she and Charles admired, not only in her representation of the performance of Puritan text, but also, the work of the minister. Drawing on Puritan depictions of ministerial duties Spurgeon further portrays the Puritan text as scriptural food necessary to the

[24] In the second chapter I provide further historical context and trace the development of Dissenting textuality.

minister's preaching, his "work of feeding the flock of God," satisfying his own hunger, and ensuring the sustenance and doctrinal stability of his flock (*TY* 314)

Spurgeon dramatizes the power, provision, and influence of Puritan texts by drawing on images and metaphors typically applied to the Bible itself, or seminal texts representative of the Dissenting faith, such as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. In doing so, she signals that her Puritan books, with the diverse agency they embody, are necessary to the spiritual life of all believers. She therefore encourages her Dissenting readers to not only procure these texts for their spiritual health, but to support her Fund and return to the "right road" of Puritan truth.

d. Contribution to Scholarship

This project seeks to recover the work of a Dissenting woman writer and reformer, whose life has been overshadowed by the legacy of her husband. In doing so this dissertation, and Spurgeon's writing, simultaneously contributes to the fields of nineteenth-century Dissenting gender, textuality, and ministerial work, as well as the history of the Baptist tradition and Nonconformist theology. First, Spurgeon's reports not only provide records of book distribution, but also illustrate how nineteenth-century ministerial wives both embraced and negotiated the traditional boundaries of their position. This examination of her life and Fund, therefore, contributes to and nuances the study of Dissenting women's religious work, self-representation, and theological writing. Second, a consideration of the diverse power and influence Spurgeon attributes to Puritan texts contributes to the burgeoning field of nineteenth-century theories of textuality. Her reports provide new evidence for the study of the godly text as agent, beyond the Bible and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Through the examination of Spurgeon's Fund and her interaction with contemporary theological controversies, this project also contributes to the study of the religious and historical context of late nineteenth-century Dissent and Baptist theology.

Finally, Spurgeon's reports provide unprecedented first-hand accounts of Dissenting ministerial work. The analysis of her recorded letters from ministers provides new material, of which there is little, for the study of nineteenth-century pastoral compensation and living conditions.

III. "The book became very precious": Autobiographical and Historical Context

Spurgeon presents her early life and relationship to her husband not through the lens of the "help-meet," but through the agency and spiritual benefits of the Puritan text. She records her relationship to Charles through three short chapters in a section of the second volume of *C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography* titled "Love, Courtship, and Marriage." Given CH. Spurgeon's vast library, his reliance on scriptural texts for sermon preparation, and his love of reading, as well as Spurgeon's own textual work, it is not surprising texts are integral to her account of their early relationship. However, Spurgeon not only mentions their mutual enjoyment of Puritan texts, but she represents the development of their entire relationship through textual exchange. Each stage, from first meeting to marriage, is marked by reference to a particular text they shared or gifted each other. Spurgeon's use of texts as markers or symbols of particular milestones suggests not only that these books are significant objects in her life, but also that they are significant to her *representation* of her life. By shaping her connection to Charles through Puritan books Spurgeon signals Puritan texts and doctrine are foundational not only to the minister's life, but also to the minister's wife's marriage and future work. Therefore, the following examination of her account introduces both Spurgeon's representation of her position as ministerial wife and the Puritan text as agent.

a. Theological Context of Spurgeon's Book Fund

Spurgeon records the chapters of her life and marriage in 1897, at 65 years of age. At this point her Book Fund was operational for twenty-two years and both collections of her Fund

reports were written and published (13 and 3 years prior). This retrospection is significant as Spurgeon's life narrative is written *in light of* her experience distributing texts and her representation of Puritan books in the Fund reports; both of which are influenced by the historical and theological context in which her Fund operates. In her reports Spurgeon emphasizes that her Fund is a response not only to the financial struggle of ministers in procuring godly texts, but also to the spiritual famine caused by the rise of "the 'new theology'" (*TYA* 245).[25] Spurgeon's reference is to a school of theology that emerged within Dissent in the late nineteenth century. In response to a changing cultural and religious atmosphere Dissenting theologians and ministers began to not only question, but also adjust or modernize the Puritan "Calvinist theology in which they had been nurtured" (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 43). Ministers who began to "reinterpret their nonconformity in a more contemporary context" embraced what they suggested was a "New Theology," also known as Broad Dissent (Brown K, "Ministerial" 366).[26]

New Theology was not entirely "new," but reflected a shift in emphasis with significant implications. Dissenting theology was traditionally known for its firm unwavering commitment to the Bible, atonement (Christ's sacrifice for sinners), and the process of election, implying some were damned to eternal suffering. In an attempt to modernize and soften their beliefs liberal preachers began to "neglect the atonement, downplay hell and dismiss other biblical teachings" (Bebbington "Baptist thought"). Followers of New Theology were also open to re-interpreting the Bible in light of advances in scientific knowledge and theories of creation.

[25] New Theology and the liberalization of Dissent is further examined in chapters two and four.

[26] The New School of Theology had many supporters. It was dominant in Congregationalism and the most respected Congregational minister of the period, R.W. Dale, had declared openly against previously held Reformed doctrines, such as eternal punishment (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 57).

Liberal Dissenters suggested New Theology was a "natural development of theology," enlarging, rather than changing their doctrine (Bush & Nettles 192).

For orthodox Dissenters who remained committed to traditional, evangelical "old" Calvinist doctrine the changes represented not modern adjustment, but rejection of divine truth (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 20). If preachers hinted at the possibility that all persons would ultimately be saved then there was no longer fear of eternal suffering; "the Evangelical message lost its compulsive power" (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 69, 81). Furthermore, new views of creation, particularly those inspired by Darwin's theories of evolution, directly opposed the biblical idea "that human beings had been created in God's image, and were of a different order than the rest of the natural world" (Black et al 512). For traditional Dissenters, such as the Spurgeons, Scripture was the heart of their theology. Therefore, when proponents of New Theology suggested the Bible was as "a book of primary sources," rather than the authoritative Word of God, "orthodox Dissenters…felt that the foundations of their faith were threatened" (Bush & Nettles 188, Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 20).

CH. Spurgeon, a devout Calvinist dedicated to Reformed scriptural theology, was especially concerned when such modern views arose among Baptist ministers. He wrote a series of essays (published in *The Sword and the Trowel*) against New Theology, declaring Baptist theology and churches were sliding "downward," away from biblical truth. This theological shift, and CH. Spurgeon's response, became known as the "Downgrade Controversy."[27] CH. Spurgeon's articles inspired a number of responses, both for and against his views, from Dissenting ministers and theologians resulting in a doctrinal battle lasting over a year. The Controversy came to a halt when CH. Spurgeon dramatically exited the Baptist Union, declaring

[27] Spurgeon's representation of and involvement in the Down-Grade Controversy is the focus of chapter four.

his church would no longer be part of a tradition that refused to address or reject modern heresy. He continued to publish and preach against "modern thought," as both he and Spurgeon refer to the doctrine, throughout the remainder of his ministry.

b. Spurgeon's Book-Marked Life Narrative

The Controversy not only affected Charles's life, but also shaped and influenced Spurgeon's representation of her Fund, the texts she distributes, the work she performs, and, as noted below, how she portrays her early life and marriage. In her later reports Spurgeon characterizes contemporary Dissenting theology as "deliberate divergence from the plain paths of the old Gospel" and she positions herself and her Fund as firmly committed to "solid old-fashioned, Scriptural, Puritanic theology" (*TYA* 28). Her dedication to, and idealization of, Puritan doctrine emerges throughout her work. Thus, her description of her early relationship to Charles performs not only as autobiographical record, but also as a testament to, even argument for, the necessity, agency, and power of Puritan books.

By shaping her account of her life and marriage around Puritan texts, Spurgeon affirms her representation of such texts as evangelizing agents and spiritual guides. In the *Autobiography* the texts connected to the Spurgeons' relationship are often presented with a similar rhetoric of agency as in the Fund reports and as objects that influence both Charles's and Spurgeon's faith. Therefore, by presenting the stages of her relationship as textually mediated Spurgeon attempts to direct her readers beyond the moments of her personal life and towards the work of the texts. Books she portrays as Spirit-filled objects capable of guiding readers, including great preachers and "despondent" souls such as herself, on their "pilgrimage" toward Christ (*Autobiography* 2.6). Second, in response to the late nineteenth-century liberalization of Reformed theology Spurgeon represents Puritan texts as the most effective scriptural agents for spiritual progress.

The Book Fund primarily distributes Puritan books to ministers; however, by associating such texts with her and Charles's ideal godly marriage Spurgeon indicates Puritan books are not only "savoury meat" (*TY* 346) for ministers, but "bright diamonds" for all believers (*Autobiography* 2.19). Third, by shaping her experiences through texts Spurgeon presents a model of the ideal godly life for Dissenting women and ministerial wives. Though her relationship to Charles is at the centre of her narrative, it is the Puritan text, and not a Puritan man, who guides her spiritual life and marriage.

Spurgeon introduces her account of her early life and marriage by recording Charles's gift to her of a copy of the seventeenth-century Puritan text *The Pilgrim's Progress*. She represents Bunyan's text, arguably the most significant text of the Dissenting Puritan tradition, as drawing them together, relationally and spiritually.[28] Upon hearing one of Charles's first sermons, Dec. 18 1853 at New Park Street Chapel in Cambridgeshire, Spurgeon notes her first impressions were not overwhelming: "if the whole truth be told, I was not at all fascinated by the young orator's eloquence" (*Autobiography* 2.5).[29] Spurgeon assures her readers that her inability to see Charles's impressive "presentation of the gospel" was not due to his "countrified manner," but rather her own spiritual "season of darkness, despondency, and doubt" (2.6). Spurgeon "surrendered to Christ" a year prior, but had since become "cold and indifferent to the things of God" (2.6). She writes that she assumed a family friend, William Olney, an active member at New Park, spoke to Charles, unbeknownst to her at the time, about her spiritual struggles. Four months after hearing Charles's first sermon Spurgeon was "surprised to receive from [Charles]

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[28] Chapter four examines how Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* also shaped Spurgeon's portrayal of the Dissenting theological context and her representation of her Fund work, writing, and commitment to the Reformed Puritan tradition.
[29] She also admits his "long, badly trimmed hair, and the blue pocket-handkerchief…attracted most of [her] attention, and…awakened some feelings of amusement" (2.5).

an illustrated copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress*" with the inscription: "Miss Thompson with desires for her progress in the blessed pilgrimage from CH. Spurgeon, April 20 1854" (2.6-7).

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was arguably the one text, aside from the Bible, that had the greatest influence upon the life, faith, and ministry of CH. Spurgeon. The Victorians "consumed pilgrimage narratives, a genre for which Bunyan's text was the central template, in huge numbers" (Mason 151). However, for nineteenth-century Dissenters, including the Spurgeons, Bunyan's text was so revered because of its "long presence…in Dissent and Nonconformity"; it was at the heart of the Puritan Dissenting tradition (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 58). In light of the Down-Grade and threats of New Theology, Charles emphasized "Bunyan's works needed to be more deeply imbibed by his contemporaries" (Morden & Bebbington 30). Although Spurgeon does not reference her husband's familiarity with Bunyan's text in the *Autobiography*, at the time of publishing (1897) any reader familiar with CH. Spurgeon would know, through his sermons and writings, of his love for Bunyan. CH. Spurgeon consistently portrays Bunyan's texts as powerful objects capable of transforming readers, including himself.[30] He first read *Pilgrim's Progress* at six years of age and continued to re-read the text, over one hundred times, throughout his life (CH. Spurgeon *Pictures* 11).[31] He later suggests that reading Bunyan's text is "almost like reading the Bible itself…why, the man is a living Bible!...his blood is Bibline" (*Autobiography* 4:268). CH. Spurgeon also claimed that, like the Bible, Bunyan's texts were "truthfully instructive" and capable of teaching and transforming readers (quoted in George 114). Therefore, his gifting of the book to his wife implies both his affection for her (he was

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[30] Spurgeon's many references to Bunyan in both his sermons and articles published in *The Sword and the Trowel* were gathered into one volume by his son, Thomas, in 1903: *C. H. Spurgeon, Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress: A Commentary on Portions of John Bunyan's Immortal Allegory.*
[31] See chapter two section "Spurgeon and Puritan Textuality" and the introduction to chapter four for further details regarding CH. Spurgeon's appreciation of and reliance on Bunyan's theology and work.

sharing an object close to his heart) and his reliance upon Puritan texts as the primary aids for spiritual improvement. Charles's inscription confirms his belief that the book would direct and encourage her "pilgrimage." Significantly, Spurgeon does not record the inscription, but has it reproduced in a facsimile at the top of the page. This further emphasizes the importance of the text as a record of their relationship, a private note exchanged between the couple, and as testimony to the text's power. The reader cannot help but focus on Charles's handwritten intention for the text, "desires for her progress," emphasizing the book as an agent of spiritual growth.

Spurgeon's response to Charles's gift further represents the book as an object of transformation. Immediately following the facsimile of the inscription Spurgeon records that she believed her husband's gift reflected his intention to "help a struggling soul Heavenward" and she declares "the book became very precious as well as helpful" (*Autobiography 2*.7). Here, she suggests it was not simply Charles's concern for her soul that encouraged her, but also the "help" provided by the text itself. She signals that Puritan texts, particularly those as biblically sound as *Pilgrim's Progress*, are necessary guides and antidotes with the capacity to "wake" readers, such as herself, from a spiritual state of despondency. She confirms that with the help of Bunyan's text, conversations with Charles, and "the power of the Holy Spirit," she received the "peace and pardon [her] weary soul was longing for" (2.7). By illustrating her connection to Charles through the improvement of her spiritual life, as facilitated by the book, Spurgeon reminds her readers that godly Puritan books, and not just Puritan men, are essential for the "blessed pilgrimage."

Spurgeon describes the next stage in her relationship to Charles through a second textual exchange. A few months into their friendship, June 1854, Spurgeon and a group of friends,

including Charles, were gathered at Sydenham to celebrate the opening of the Crystal Palace. She writes that while she was talking and laughing with friends "Mr. Spurgeon handed me a book…and, pointing to some particular lines, said 'what do you think of the poet's suggestion in those verses?'" (2.7). The text she received was *Proverbial Philosophy: A Book of Thoughts and Arguments* (1838) by the evangelical poet and writer Martin Farquhar Tupper.[32] Charles directed her to the following lines:

> Seek a good wife of thy God, for she is the best gift of his providence;
> Yet ask not in bold confidence that which he hath not promised:
> Thou knowest not his good-will : be thy prayer then submissive thereunto;
> And leave thy petition to his mercy, assured that he will deal well with thee.
> If thou art to have a wife of thy youth, she is now living on the earth;
> Therefore think of her, and pray for her weal. (2.7)

As she read the words Charles's "soft low voice" whispered into her ear: "Do you pray for him who is to be your husband?" (2.8). Spurgeon admits she cannot remember if she answered at all, but she responded with a "fast-beating heart" and "flush to [her] cheeks" (2.8). Later that day Charles invited Spurgeon to walk around the Palace with him. She records it was on this "memorable day in June" that God "united our hearts in indissoluble bonds of true affection" and "our friendship…quickly ripened into deepest love" (2.8). Though this passage allows Spurgeon to suggest her future marriage would be founded on godly principles, the text as a whole is less significant than the previous, *Pilgrim's Progress* (she admits that "neither the book nor its theories were again alluded to" (2.8)). However, it is her representation of the *use* of the text that

[32] Tupper (1810-1889), an English writer "firm in his Christian faith," published a variety of works on numerous topics from religious doubt to archeology. Though only *Proverbial Philosophy,* "a series of loosely rhythmical aphorisms on such subjects as marriage, friendship, and humility" still occupies "even a marginal place in cultural history" (Dingley).

is of note. Charles could have simply asked Spurgeon if she felt God was leading her to him as a husband. His reliance on a text suggests not only that the written words expressed his intentions, but that they would guide Spurgeon towards God's will in a way that he could not.

As referenced in the previous section, for nineteenth-century evangelical Dissenters, religious tracts were considered "powerful messengers" that "arrested" sinners, "confounded" sceptics, and "established…humble believer[s] in…holy faith" (RTS *Proceedings* 415). Though Charles is not referring to a tract, he is relying on a passage with godly principles and the rhetoric of the power of such texts would have been very familiar to him, both as a preacher and a writer. Charles was not seeking to "convert" Spurgeon, but by presenting this text as the moment she intimately connected to Charles, Spurgeon represents the book as the agent that turns her "wavering" heart toward God and, in accordance with His will, Charles. For nineteenth-century Dissenters reading a tract or religious text was an "experience similar to conversing with a trusted and learned friend" (Fyfe 109). Likewise, Charles's reference to the passage suggests Spurgeon may have been more familiar with and comfortable "conversing" with a book than with a preacher. By including this exchange as a significant moment in her connection to Charles, Spurgeon not only presents their relationship as founded on prayer and faith, but she also validates her representation of texts as mediators and agents that direct readers to God's will in any circumstance.

Spurgeon continues to shape the development of her relationship to Charles with textual references. The next stage, their first declaration of love and engagement, corresponds to Spurgeon's gift to Charles of John Calvin's *Commentaries.* Following the record of their courtship Spurgeon refers to August 2, 1854 as the day "my beloved sought me for his very own" (*Autobiography* 2.8-9). She records her belief that she was "undeserving" of the love of

"so eminent a servant of God," but suggests "*he* [Charles] did not think this, but looked upon his wife as God's earthly gift to him" (2.9; italics original). Spurgeon notes that her husband would often write "a brief comment in any of his books which he specially valued" and here she records a facsimile of his inscription in Calvin's text:

> The volumes making up a complete set of Calvin were a gift to me from own most dear, tender wife. Blessed may she be among women. How much of comfort and strength she has ministered unto me it is not in my power to estimate. She has been to me God's best earthly gift, trust a little even of heavenly treasure has come to me by her means. She has often been an angel of God unto me. C.H. Spurgeon (2.11).

Spurgeon suggests she references this inscription as "a direct confirmation of what I have written on page 9," (2.11) namely her husband's love for her as "God's earthly gift." Prior to the inscription Spurgeon records Charles's expression of happiness for her improved spiritual state (the "work of grace" in her soul (2.10)) and his love for her ("I love you with the deepest and purest affection" 2.10)). Despite the earlier references Spurgeon provides yet another record of her husband's affection for her. However, as with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, both the text itself and the inscription are significant to Spurgeon's representation of her position as ministerial partner and the Puritan text as agent.

Spurgeon prefaces the inscription by declaring the importance of the text for Charles; he inscribes books which he "specially value[s]" (*Autobiography* 2.11). As the first book she gifts her future husband and one that shapes her record of her marriage, it is also, evidently, of value to Spurgeon. The text holds such significance as it is reflective of the Puritan tradition that both Charles and Spurgeon fervently embraced. Charles's preaching and faith were defined by Calvinism; he declared he was a "true Calvinist after the order of John Calvin himself" (2.225).

As his contemporaries adapted their preaching and theology to modern ideals CH. Spurgeon emphasized his allegiance to the "old doctrines," the teachings of Augustine, Calvin, and the Puritans (Ella). Charles also modelled his preaching on Calvin and "resembl[ed] the great Reformer in style" (Fullerton 119). Much like his admiration of Bunyan, Charles announced of Calvin: "Among all those who have been born of women, there has not risen a greater than John Calvin; no age before him ever produced his equal, and no age afterwards has seen his rival" (*Autobiography* 2.372). Thus, when Spurgeon gifted Calvin's revered texts to Charles he celebrated his love for her, and the book, in his inscription. By incorporating this seminal text of the Puritan tradition into her narrative Spurgeon represents the book, and the doctrine, as central to the life and work of *both* the minister and his wife.

The text and inscription also remind Spurgeon's readers what kind of books are useful and valuable to ministers. She declares in her reports that she intends to distribute only "the best and choicest of theological works," which, she explains, are "any of the Puritan divines" (*TY* 34, 115) By including this inscription Spurgeon not only draws readers to the godly principles of her life and marriage, but she draws them to a particular, Puritan text. One that is a valued and powerful object not only because it is paramount to her husband's life, but because it is "scriptural" and will guide readers to the truth. It is the "choicest of theological works" that, like *Commentaries* to Charles, and like Spurgeon's godly connection to Charles, will be, "heavenly treasure[s]."

Significantly, in this inscription Charles represents Spurgeon not as merely serving or helping him but empowering him. Here, her position as wife is one of *both* "tender" comfort *and* immense strength. Furthermore, by drawing on this particular representation of herself, in Calvin's text, Spurgeon associates her work and agency not only with Charles, but also with the Reformed Calvinist theology of the Puritan tradition. In language echoing Charles's inscription

Spurgeon declares in her reports that scriptural Puritan texts are "ministering angel[s]" to starving readers (*TY* 204). She therefore signals that Puritan books and Puritan women are both agents of God that provide guidance and spiritual strength.

Following their engagement Spurgeon records the continued development of their relationship through a selection of letters exchanged between her and Charles, as well as their first joint literary work, *Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Brooks*.[33] The text is a collection of quotes by the Puritan writer Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) introduced and arranged by the Spurgeons. Along with Bunyan and Calvin, Brooks was also admired by Charles and often quoted in his sermons and texts. Spurgeon refers to Brooks as one of her husband's "favourite Puritan writers" (*Autobiography* 2.19).[34] In the introduction to *Smooth Stones* Charles declares Brooks to be "a great divine…head and shoulders above all people…in mind, and soul, and grace" (iii). He admired his preaching but also his literary theology: "As a writer, Brooks scatters stars with both his hands…genius is always marvellous; but when sanctified it is matchless" (3). Charles considered Brook's work so valuable, to both himself and his wife, that he invited her to join him in studying Brook's texts and selecting quotes for publication. By again representing her connection to Charles through a Puritan text, Spurgeon signals that such texts are necessary not only for the preaching minister and a godly marriage, but also for the life and work of the minister's wife. Here, the text provides Spurgeon both spiritual instruction and, significantly, doctrinal knowledge.

[33] The collaboration is also Spurgeon's first involvement in the production of a text. Notably, the Spurgeons worked together on this text prior to marriage, reflecting both their early commitment to each other and to Puritan books. Despite her contributions Spurgeon is not listed as an author or editor of the text.
[34] See chapter three, "Spurgeon's Puritan Sources," for further discussion of Brooks, *Smooth Stones,* and the Spurgeons' defense of Puritan Reformed doctrine.

In her record of their literary collaboration Spurgeon notes that Charles asked her to "go carefully through" one of Brooks's texts and "mark[…]" sections that she found "particularly… quaint, or instructive" (*Autobiography* 2.19). Her description of her work provides her readers, particularly ministers' wives, with an example of *how* to read a godly text: "carefully," "marking all those paragraphs and sentences that strike you as being…instructive," and seek the "bright diamonds" of truth within the text (19). Here Spurgeon presents herself as faithful and obedient to her husband, while also, simultaneously, performing her own work with godly texts. Work through which she embraces the authority to study Puritan doctrine and determine passages that might be useful to male preachers. She signals that her duties as a ministerial wife are reflective of both obedience and agency, submission and independence, ministerial support and theological study. In doing so she re-defines the traditional training and work of the "help-meet" and, as I argue in chapters three and four, challenges the gendered boundaries of Dissenting theological study.[35]

In her description of Brooks's work Spurgeon emphasizes the benefit as well as the spiritual power of Puritan texts; reflective of the agency she attributes to Puritan books throughout her Fund reports. She suggests that at first Brooks's text appeared as "an ancient, rusty-looking…dry book"; she doubted it would contain anything of value (2.19). However, upon reading the text she recognized the "spiritual beauty" her husband found in the book (2.19). Spurgeon refers to the "instructive" passages she and Charles chose from Brooks's text as "bright diamonds and red gold" that were "enshrined" in the book (2.19). The metaphors of precious gems contradict the dry crusty imagery and emphasize the valuable teachings hidden

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[35] In chapter three, "Spurgeon's Theological Study and Puritan Library" and chapter four, "Spurgeon's Participation in the Down-Grade," I provide further analysis of Spurgeon's record of studying Puritan texts. Here I consider how such work contributes to her representation of the ministerial partner's position and validates her own doctrinal argument against liberal theology.

inside the book. For Dissenters leaning towards new liberal theology the teachings of the Puritans were seemingly “ancient” or irrelevant. However, here, Spurgeon suggests to her readers that like diamonds, Puritan books ought to be considered the most valuable as they contain the instructive “gold” of transformative power.

The introduction to *Smooth Stones* further illustrates Spurgeon’s representation of the Puritan text as a prized agent. The Spurgeons describe Brooks’s teachings as “dust of gold” and echoing Spurgeon’s process (go carefully through and mark instructive passages), they instruct the reader how to read the selections:“ treasure these gems, and adorn thyself with them” and “use these ‘smooth stones ’as David of old” (iii-iv). In order for the text to teach and guide the reader must not simply skim the material, but “treasure” the words so the power of the text may be applied, in this case, as a guide and defence in times of trial. The reference to David and his “stones” would have been familiar for the readers of the text who could likely recall the biblical story of the celebrated triumph of David over Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:1-58. In the passage David chose “five smooth stones out of the brook” (*King James Version,* 1 Sam. 17:40), rather than a sword or weapon, to use in defence against the giant Philistine, Goliath. David uses just one stone to “smote the Philistine in his forehead…and he fell upon his face to the earth” (1 Sam. 17:49).[36] Since he relied merely on stones, “his confidence was purely in the power of God, and not in any sufficiency of his own” (Henry). Thus, the Spurgeons’ instruction to “use the stones as David” implies the text holds the power of the Spirit and if read with faith, the book will guide the reader through any trial, defeating the challenge as David conquered Goliath.

The Spurgeons’ instruction is also significant in light of the contemporary liberalization of Dissenting theology, specifically within the Baptist tradition. In this context Brook’s text is

[36] All biblical references are to the King James Version.

representative as both protective armour, "adorn thyself with them," and a weapon that is capable of conquering the Goliath of progressive theology. Puritan books are, therefore, necessary tools for spiritual strength and theological battle. Furthermore, the Spurgeons proclaim the text has the power to illuminate the Bible, "open up…Scripture to [the readers'] understanding," and transform" the sinner's conscience, like an arrow from the bow of God" (iv). The book is not only an agent of defence, but also of illumination and conviction. Spurgeon's representation of Brooks's work, in the *Autobiography* and introduction to *Smooth Stones*, suggests reading and studying Puritan texts is beneficial to a godly marriage and essential to the Dissenting woman's defence of faith.

To mark the next stage in their relationship Spurgeon refers to a copy of her husband's sermons, *The Pulpit Library*. Charles gifted her the text and she records the book as a "relic" of this "memorable time" (*Autobiography* 2.27), referring to the happiness of their relationship just prior to marriage. She includes a facsimile of an inscription from Charles on the text's fly-leaf: "'In a few days it will be out of my power to present anything to Miss Thompson. Let this be a remembrance of our happy meetings and sweet conversations. Dec 22/55 C.H. Spurgeon'" (2.27). Spurgeon's reference to this text as the "one relic" suggests it is a memorable object connected to their early relationship. However, given the selection of letters between husband and wife that are included in this chapter it is peculiar that she presents this text as the *only* remaining artifact of this "memorable time" in her relationship. Prior to her reference to this text Spurgeon includes at least six quoted sections from various letters she received from Charles at this time, the few months before their marriage.[37] Yet Spurgeon is clear in her declaration that

[37] CH. Spurgeon travelled extensively throughout his ministry and wrote hundreds of letters to his wife. Here the letters express his love and anticipation of their marriage, to the point that Spurgeon tries "to leave the 'love' out of the letters" so as not to bore her readers (*Autobiography* 2.23). The affection is quite apparent: "I know I loved you

"there is just one" artifact that truly represents this time in her life: not the love letters, but the text (2.27). By portraying this text as a valued object from an earlier time, even an object of reverence, the book provides "evidence" of her life as a ministerial partner; a life characterized and defined by Puritan texts and even, Puritan sermons.

The readers of the *Autobiography* would have been familiar with Charles's sermons, they were widely published and circulated at this time, and also with the recorded influence of the sermons.[38] Numerous stories of conversion and conviction inspired by CH. Spurgeon's sermons are recorded in the collections of sermons (such as *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* and *The New Park Street Pulpit*), local periodicals and newspapers, and in Spurgeon's reports. Through her Fund Spurgeon distributed collections and copies of Charles's sermons. In her reports she declares the sermons, filled with Puritan teaching and doctrine, carry "the blessing of the Lord" in their "conversion of sinners" and the "quickening, arousing, and refreshing [of] preachers of the Word" (*TY* 279). They are "precious messengers" that provide "the people real soul-food,--the true bread of life" (*TY* 301, 345). Spurgeon also emphasizes the copy of *The Pulpit Library* she received from Charles was only the "*first* published volume of [Charles's] sermons" (2.27; italics original). Signalling the popularity of the text as "real soul-food" for starving ministers. In her reports Spurgeon also records letters from ministers and missionaries testifying to the sermons' transformative power upon readers of all backgrounds and countries.[39] Furthermore, at the time of writing Spurgeon had witnessed, through her Fund, how her husband's texts

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very much before, but now I feel how necessary you are to me," "How I love you! I long to see you" (2.24, 27). Charles also expresses his desire for them to grow in God through their marriage: "may your…love to Him [be] increased" and "may we be mutual blessings" (2.27). The letters provide a rare glimpse into a Puritan love story.

[38]Most Penny Pulpits sold over 25,000 copies and "at CH. Spurgeon's death in 1892, tens of millions of copies [of the weekly 'Penny Pulpit' sermons] had been produced" (Drummond 324). By the end of the nineteenth century close to one hundred million copies of his weekly sermons had been sold (Drummond 322).

[39] Her reports include numerous testimonies from those who claimed they were converted and transformed upon reading CH. Spurgeon's sermons : "I was awakened out of a sinner's natural self-complacency to cry 'What must I do to be saved?'" (*TY* 53).

apparently performed as doctrinal agents of conversion in the Down-Grade Controversy. She suggests many ministers who were "entangle[d]" in "The New Theology" had "returned to the old paths" of Reformed Puritan truth" through "the blessed influence of my dear husband's writings" (*TYA* 251). Spurgeon's reference to *The Pulpit library*, therefore, emphasizes both her "happy" memories with Charles and the power and necessity of Puritan books; divine agents capable of inspiring "sweet conversations" and dramatic conversions.

Spurgeon concludes the chapter of her early life and marriage by recording the details of the wedding, including her memories of the day and the address by the minister. In her final sentence she refers to one more text - the Bible. She specifically references "Mr. Spurgeon's own inscription in our family Bible, recording the marriage, and adding a lovely comment eleven years afterwards" (*Autobiography* 2.31). She also records the full inscription: "Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Susannah Thompson were by the precious arrangement of Divine Providence, most happily married at New Park Street Chapel by Dr Alexander Fletcher on Tuesday, January 8th 1856. 'And as year rolls after year/ Each to the other still more dear'" (2.32).[40] It is not uncommon to find a number of family events (the birth of a child or baptism), especially a marriage, recorded on the inside pages of a nineteenth-century family Bible. However, by including the inscription as a facsimile, filling the entire final page of the chapter, Spurgeon represents the biblical text as both significant to her marriage and her representation of her life.

The previously mentioned texts, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the works of Brooks and Calvin, and Charles's own sermons, are strongly tied to the Puritan tradition. However, there is no text more significant to Puritan faith, and to Charles and Spurgeon, than the Bible itself. As referenced above, Spurgeon's emphasis upon "old fashioned, Scriptural" texts, in both her book distribution

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[40] Charles's later added quotation, a reference to the nineteenth-century marriage hymn by William Bengo Collyer, emphasizes the Spurgeons' continued happiness and dedication.

and the texts representative of her life, is reflective of the late nineteenth-century theological changes within Dissent; particularly the shift away from biblically-centred Puritan doctrine and toward liberal "worldly theology" that questioned the divine inspiration of the Bible.[41] Thus, at a time when the Word of God was questioned, Spurgeon represents both her marriage and her position as minister's wife, as defined, directed, and inspired by scriptural texts. Her final reference reminds her readers that her marriage and life is literally engraved in biblical truth, built upon biblical principles, and continues (after eleven years) to be defined in relation to the Bible.

By including Charles's reference to the marriage as arranged by "divine providence" Spurgeon also signals that the Bible is the ultimate guide for the Dissenting woman's marriage and work. Puritan and Baptist doctrine emphasize divine providence, determining and following God's will, is primarily revealed through the Bible. Throughout his sermons Charles often preached that "the practical benefits of the doctrine of Providence" are found in" reading the Scriptures" (*Sermons* 188). Therefore, by presenting her marriage as arranged by providence, Spurgeon suggests they were united by God's power, as determined by their reliance on Scripture. In the Dissenting tradition the minister's position is also considered one of divine appointment, a pastoral calling with "sacred obligations" (*Hints* vi). Here, Spurgeon signals that her marriage, and thus her position as pastoral wife, is also divinely appointed. Furthermore she portrays her Fund work, which extends far beyond the minister's wife's duties of "Christian love…among women" (1-2), as a direct calling from God (*Hints* 1-2). Echoing the "sacred" calling and work of the minister she declares her Fund work is "a sacred charge…given me from the Lord Himself" (*TY* 44). In doing so she elevates the position and work of the minister's wife.

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[41] Chapter four, "Nineteenth-century Dissenting Theological Context," further examines how the doctrines of New Theology cast doubt on the authority and infallibility of the Bible.

Countering the suggestion that minister's wife's labour is of "lesser…usefulness" Spurgeon emphasizes her work, like the minister's "sacred duties," is also a directive from God and thus, it will "bring forth much fruit to His glory" (*Hints* 1, *TY* 55-6).

By weaving the account of her relationship to Charles through six textual exchanges Spurgeon represents her narrative as a "love story" founded upon and defined by Puritan books. In doing so she validates the necessity of Puritan texts and doctrine not only for ministers, but also for the life and work of the minister's wife. She reminds her readers that Puritan books are not merely helpful tools for marriage but also "messengers" that lead "struggling soul[s] Heavenward" and "stones" for theological defense. In the beginning of her account Spurgeon declares that "the majority of readers" will not only see her "choicest memories," in these chapters, but she is "convinced" they will "gather up" the "treasures [she has] scattered" (*Autobiography* 2.1). In light of Spurgeon's representation of her life through "valued," "precious," Puritan texts, the "treasures" are not only the memories of her godly courtship, but also the books that she has "scattered" as "bright diamonds" throughout her narrative. She adds that upon gathering these Puritan gems readers will "find themselves greatly enriched by their possession" (1). For, nothing strengthens and nourishes Dissenting pilgrims as the "soul-food" of Puritan texts (*TY* 345).

IV. "An intense desire…to place [the book] in the hands of every minister": Introduction to the Book Fund

At just 16 years of age CH. Spurgeon established Spurgeon's College in London to provide ministerial training for young men who desired to enter the ministry, "but had not received the formal academic education required for entry to the existing colleges" (Spurgeon's

College).[42] Initially Charles taught a few students in a fellow minister's home. Susannah Spurgeon records they "planned and pinched" in order to start the College (*Autobiography* 2.183). By 1861 the College was formally established and operated out of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon suggests their financial sacrifices were "God's way of preparing [her] to sympathize with and help poor pastors in the years which were to come" (2.183). Charles published a number of the "lessons" he gave to the young ministers in *Lectures To My Students* (1875). After Spurgeon read a proof copy prior to publication she proclaimed: "I wish I could place [the book] in the hands of every minister in England" (*TY* 5). Her record of reading the proof further suggests she supported her husband but also participated in similar ministerial work herself; reading Charles's material, doctrinal study, and sermon preparation. As suggested throughout this dissertation, Spurgeon represents her position as not only defined by "help" for Charles but also her own active, independent theological work for the benefit of Dissenting ministers and congregations.

Upon declaring her desire to distribute her husband's text Spurgeon records that Charles encouraged her venture: "then why not do so: how much will you give?" (*TY* 5). Spurgeon admits "it had not occurred [to her]" how she would "assist…or help pay for it" (*TY* 5). However, she suggests she immediately began to consider "how much [she] could spare" from her own personal "matters" in order to "start this new scheme" (*TY* 5). Spurgeon notes that her enterprise was funded by her own "carefully hoarded crown-pieces," but she also ensures her Fund's inauguration is attributed to her husband's influence and God's direction. After "consulting with [CH. Spurgeon regarding her desire to distribute his text], she writes "he

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[42] Spurgeon's College still currently operates in London "with both male and female students, covering a wide range of ages and ethnicities." The College declares "its commitment to evangelism and social concern continues today, as [CH. Spurgeon] would have wished" (Spurgeon's College).

approved my wish" (*TY* 44). She also reminds her readers of the Fund's heavenly foundation when, as if from divine providence, the amount she had "been gathering for years whenever chance threw one in my way" happened to be "*exactly* sufficient to pay for 100 copies of the work!" (*TY* 6; italics original). She also declares she must "ascribe the origin of the Book Fund to the kind hand of the loving Father Himself" (*TY* 43). Although Spurgeon carefully portrays the creation of the Fund as initiated by the influence of her husband and the "hand" of God, she is not silent regarding her own will and action.

Spurgeon suggests she not only wished to distribute her husband's text, but she had "an intense desire…to place a copy in the hands of every minister in England" (*TY* 44). The Fund is not only from God, but also her own "intense desire" and determination to distribute the book. Similarly, when she notices Charles's four (eventually seven) volume commentary on the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*, in his study she announces: "the question instantly sprang to my lips, 'Why could I not send these also to poor ministers?'" (*TY* 44). Though the Fund's origin and continuance is inspired by her husband's material and "fostered" by God, the impetus is rooted in a desire that stems from Spurgeon's own lips, her own voice, and reflects her intention to act: "why could *I* not send these?" (italics added). Here, Spurgeon establishes both the necessity and independent agency of her work. In doing so she represents the Puritan text, and Puritan woman, as the answer to ministerial need.

The first record of the Fund in Spurgeon's text *Ten Years* is dated July 1875. The report, a short paragraph written by Charles, is titled, "Notes from 'The Sword and the Trowel,'" confirming it was first published in Charles's periodical, *The Sword and the Trowel*. He records that his wife has "so much interest[..]" in his text, *Lectures to my Students*, "that she would like to bear the cost of giving a copy to each of a hundred poor Baptist ministers" who may send in

applications for the book (*TY* 6).[43] Charles writes the next four records of the Fund (August-November 1875) and reveals that the applications for books are so "numerous" that Spurgeon has begun to distribute a variety of titles "every day…to needy brethren" (*TY* 7).[44] By September Charles refers to the book distribution as a "beneficent service" now titled "Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund" (*TY* 7). For its entirety the Fund operated out of the Spurgeons' residence, primarily from their "Westwood" home located at Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.[45] In the *Autobiography* Spurgeon notes that the books to be distributed were stacked in a "vestibule between the hall and the study"; the area was the "depot and packing room" for the Book Fund (3.293).[46]

When Spurgeon begins writing the reports herself in the following year she draws on metaphors of sustenance and defines the ministers' hardship as a textual famine: "the famine is sore in the land - not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a deeply-felt and widespread need for mental food" (*TY* 36). The ministers are "mentally starved" (*TY* 38) and the Fund is represented as a source of provision, a "deeply needed…service" that "reliev[es] somewhat the

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[43] Spurgeon often inscribed the copies of *Lectures*, and other titles, that she distributed or included a handwritten note addressed to the receiver of the book. See Appendix 1 for a photograph of her inscription in *Lectures* sent to a minister within the first year of the Fund's operation. Her inscriptions further testify to the divine agency she attributes to her distributed Puritan texts. In the above copy she suggests the book will carry "a blessing" to the minister. In another text distributed to a minister she included a note where she writes that through "God's blessing" the book will "minister to you comfort, refreshment, and strengthening in every good word and work." See also the footnote in chapter three, "Seventeenth-Century Ministerial 'hunger,'" referencing a note Spurgeon sent with a distributed text.

[44] See Appendices two and three for the titles and details of the texts distributed by the Fund. For most of the twenty years operating the Fund Spurgeon received over 500 letters a month from ministers, including requests for books, letters of gratitude, and donations.

[45] Upper Norwood, located south east of London, is situated on a ridge known as Beulah Hill. In her reports Spurgeon notes that the home, with "glorious views of earth and sky," was reminiscent of Bunyan's "country of Beulah" in *Pilgrim's Progress* (*TY* 125). The house, about 40 minutes drive from the Tabernacle, was located on a nine acre plot with beautiful grounds and a miniature lake. A biographer of CH. Spurgeon claims that the Spurgeons "lived in very fine homes," however, he also suggests "they never amassed any significant wealth" (Drummond 390). Much of their earnings were donated to their various charitable operations (such as CH. Spurgeon's College and an orphanage) and the Tabernacle.

[46] A visitor to their home describes Spurgeon's book room in 1884 as a small area "where innumerable volumes accumulate until the fortnightly wagon arrives from the Globe Parcel Express and carries them off from Westwood to all parts of the world" (quoted in Drummond 606).

pressure of the famine" (*TY* 48). By distributing books Spurgeon declares she is providing "nourishment for [ministers'] brains" (*TY* 46). Through these early records Spurgeon not only provides the details of the Fund's beginning, but she establishes the metaphors of nourishment through which she defines the Fund and the language of agency through which she represents Puritan texts.[47] Both of which, I argue, are critical frameworks for the study of Spurgeon's textual, theological, and ministerial work.

Within a few months of operation Spurgeon not only received numerous applications for books, but also financial and book donations from readers of *The Sword and the Trowel*. Spurgeon also claims that during the Fund's first year she "never asked help of any one but *Him*, never solicited a donation from any creature" (*TY* 48; italics original).[48] She continues to suggest, even after the Fund's first ten years, that "the great financial prosperity of the Fund…has come, not by my solicitation, but simply because my Lord has sent it" (*TYA* 13). She emphasizes throughout her reports that God provides for every want and occasion through unsolicited donations of money, books, and even, stamps and stationary. She repeatedly declares the Fund "thrive[s] vigorously" because "His blessing…rest[s] lovingly upon it, causing it to bring forth much fruit" (*TY* 48, 55-6). As God feeds ministers through the Fund, the Book Fund, in turn, "has been nourished and fed from the King's Treasury" (*TY* 55-6). By attributing the Fund's prosperity to God she portrays herself as humble and faithful, but she also validates her work as a minister's wife and her idealization of Puritan doctrine, as sanctioned by God.

[47] Spurgeon's representation of Puritan texts through language of nourishment is the focus of chapter three.
[48] In the final report published in *Ten Years After* Spurgeon claims the donations given in support of the Book Fund over twenty years totalled £23,500. In addition to "many thousands pounds distributed through the Pastors' Aid Fund, together with the substantial total of [the] Fund 'for general use in the Lord's Work,' and also the value of the books and clothes given by friends" (*TYA* 390).

a. "Mother's book": Publication and Distribution of Fund Reports

The first three years of Fund reports are published every few months in CH. Spurgeon's *The Sword and the Trowel.*[49] Beginning in 1877 the reports are distributed annually to subscribers of the Fund as "little books" or pamphlets, published without charge to Spurgeon by CH. Spurgeon's publishers, Passmore & Alabaster (*TY* 43).[50] The form varies as the reports progress; however, most of the annual records include an introductory letter followed by monthly updates of the Fund's work and transcribed portions of letters from ministers who received books. The annual reports, initially titled "The Book Fund Diary," conclude with a "Summary of Work" listing the number of volumes sent out, noting how many ministers of varying denominations received texts. In March of 1886 the first ten years of monthly and annual reports are published collectively in the text *Ten Years*. The following ten years of reports continue to be annually published as pamphlets and are then, in 1895, collected into the second volume, *Ten Years After*.

Spurgeon notes that the reports were not only distributed to subscribers of the Fund, but also to ministers and missionaries who received Fund texts. She records many letters that suggest ministers who received books had also read her reports. In the 1881 report she writes that "a young clergyman" who received texts from the Fund had also read her reports "with interest, and till then [he] had no idea of the hardships which many ministers had to suffer" (*TY* 186). She also records a letter from a Church of England clergyman who received books. He writes that he has "just read" the annual report and since he is" in a little better position"

[49] The first monthly reports published in *The Sword and Trowel* include July, August, September, and November 1875, February and August 1876, January and August 1877, and an annual report for 1876.
[50] In her 1880 report Spurgeon notes the "long-continued kindness of Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, who annually print these 'Reports' of mine without charge of any sort" (*TY* 133).

financially he has sent “a subscription to [the] Book Fund” (*TY* 209).[51] Furthermore, Spurgeon suggests that clergymen and ministers were“ personally recommending [copies of reports] among their friends” (*TYA* 25).

Spurgeon represents her reports as not only widely distributed, but also well-received and in demand. She notes in the report for 1882 that the previous year’s record “found great favour, stirred much interest, and brought large increase to the Fund” (*TY* 245).[52] The inclusion of such letters in part reflect Spurgeon’s attempt to portray, even dramatize, the success of her Fund. However, there is some evidence that suggests the reports were, in fact, widely distributed and read. The reports were often advertised in the popular collected volumes of CH. Spurgeon’s sermons, published worldwide. Spurgeon also notes that her son, Thomas, a minister in New Zealand, distributes her reports, “Mother’s book,” to members of his congregation (*TY* 290). She also suggests the reports are sent to missionaries around the world. In the report for 1893 she records: “from the other side of the world a pastor writes; ‘Thank you for *The Story of the Book Fund*. It is…a well-spring of comfort’” (*TYA* 247). Furthermore, Spurgeon records that *she* distributes copies of the annual reports (and *Ten Years*) to ministers and missionaries along with texts from the Fund. In a recorded letter from “a young pastor” he writes to thank Spurgeon “for thinking of [him] in sending the ‘Report of the Book Fund for 1886’” (*TYA* 33).[53] By doing so she is not merely informing ministers (and their wives) of the Fund’s progress, but also acting as

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[51] A Wesleyan minister also writes to thank her for books and mentions he reads “the Book Fund Report” (*TY* 207). She records another letter from a Baptist minister who has read of the work of the Fund and sends money and a letter from a Minister in the Midland Counties who has also received books and read her report for 1880 (*TY* 209, 213)

[52] Spurgeon often suggests she’s received “many good words” regarding her reports and Fund work (*TY* 245). She records numerous letters from those who have read her reports and sent money. The readers declare they “look forward almost with impatience to the publishing of [her] charming Report” (*TY* 245). She also notes she receives “frequent applications” for copies of previous years reports (*TY* 353).

[53] In the report for 1893 she records another letter from a minister who “was pleased…to receive” the report she sent to him (*TYA* 219). She also notes she sends copies of *Ten Years* to ministers who were “greatly desirous to possess it” (*TYA* 31)

her own distribution channel for her published text. Therefore, she promotes her own writing and, in turn, her model of the minister's wife's work.

As the Fund grew Spurgeon sent not only Puritan books but also copies of *The Sword and the Trowel* periodical to ministers (beginning in 1877) and monthly copies of Charles's sermons, specifically to missionaries (1883). Continued financial support and demand allowed her to establish another branch of the Fund, the Pastors' Aid Society, to send clothing and financial aid to especially poor pastors. By 1895 Spurgeon declared in "the twenty years of the Book Fund's existence…nearly *two hundred thousand volumes* have been distributed" to over 25,000 ministers and missionaries (*TYA* 393; italics original).[54] The expansion of the Fund and vast distribution of both books and reports suggests Spurgeon's work and influence extends far beyond that of "help" for her husband. This further signals that her writing, self-representation, and contribution to Dissenting pulpits and theology, demands further study.

V. Chapter Summaries

The following chapter provides historical and textual context to Spurgeon's "unwavering adherence" to Puritanism and her representation of her Fund, and herself, as a "suppl[ier]" of Puritan nourishment (*TYA* 28). First, an examination of the Puritan influence within Dissent provides insight into the theological shift that Spurgeon and her Fund operate against. By portraying her Fund as distributing texts" prized far beyond" other theological works, Spurgeon is not only seeking support for her work, but also promoting Puritan Reformed doctrine at a significant moment in Dissenting history (*TYA* 29). Therefore, a brief overview of the Dissenting turn from Puritan theology provides a necessary frame of reference for Spurgeon's

[54] Spurgeon continued to operate the Fund for eight years (1896-1903) following the final report published in *Ten Years After*. She provided periodic updates on her work in *The Sword and the Trowel*. See the conclusion for further details of how the Fund continued after Spurgeon's death.

attempt to promote and idealize Puritan texts. Second, an examination of the influences that shaped Dissenting textuality, particularly the divine power attributed to the Bible and religious texts, from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries provides context to Spurgeon's reliance upon and adaptation of a tradition of textual agency. Particular attention is given to how Spurgeon borrows features of the eighteenth-century genre of the book object-narrative to emphasize both ministerial suffering and the spiritual and material provision of Puritan books. This chapter also considers how, in her portrayal of the diverse agency of the Puritan book, Spurgeon represents not only her Fund, but her own work as ministerial wife through the image of a "supplier" of Puritan textual food.

Chapter three examines the overarching motif of textual hunger and the language of nourishment that runs throughout Spurgeon's reports. Spurgeon relies on rhetoric of sustenance to dramatize her work as a necessary and direct response to both ministerial need and the emergence of liberal "strange doctrine[s]" (*TY* 347). In doing so she positions herself and her Fund as firmly opposing theological "evil influences" (*TYA* 120). More specifically, I propose a two part argument regarding the context and significance of Spurgeon's framework of sustenance. First I examine Spurgeon's reliance on scriptural metaphors of nourishment and explore the biblical significance of her depiction of Puritan texts as "heavenly manna"(*TY* 204, 293). Through scriptural imagery familiar to her Dissenting readers Spurgeon links Puritan texts to the authority and provision of the Bible. Second, I consider how Spurgeon's language of sustenance extends to her representation of ministerial work; the minister as "hungry shepherd" who must "feed the flock" (*TY* 314). I propose her imagery is inspired by Puritan ideas of pastoral "feeding," preaching, and protecting the flock from heresy. I, therefore, consider how Spurgeon's pastoral imagery draws on the language of seventeenth-century Puritans she and

Charles admired: Thomas Brooks, Thomas Watson, and John Gill. The texts of these Puritan divines provide insight into Spurgeon's personal library and, significantly, the imagery that shapes her representation of Puritan texts, pastoral work, and her own ministry. I also propose Spurgeon's portrayal of a "famine" among the "shepherds" corresponds to both the financial instability of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministry and seventeenth-century Puritan warnings against weak doctrine (*TY* 31). Here I provide a brief examination of nineteenth-century Dissenting pastoral wages to contextualize Spurgeon's portrayal of "book hunger" (*TY* 152). The chapter concludes with an analysis of Spurgeon's self-representation as a "nursing-mother" (*TY* 378). I suggest her maternal imagery draws not from her experience as mother, but from Puritan depictions of ministerial work; the pastor feeding the church "as a nurse" through the "brests" [sic] of Scripture (Watson *Christian's Charter* 12-13). Thus, in her declaration of herself as a mother who "nurses" ministerial "children" Spurgeon portrays her work as a form of pastoral provision; a significant claim to authority for a minister's wife (*TY* 378).

Chapter four examines how imagery and language from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* informs Spurgeon's portrayal of the nineteenth-century theological context, particularly within the Baptist tradition, and her defense of Puritan doctrine. First, I consider Spurgeon's adaptation of Bunyan's scene of Doubting Castle and the imprisonment of the pilgrim, Christian. She borrows images of both the pilgrim's divergence and suffering to dramatize Dissenting liberal theology as a monstrous heresy. In doing so she not only provides a firm doctrinal stance, but also contributes to a theological debate within her Baptist tradition: the Down-Grade Controversy. Here I provide an outline of the Controversy in which CH. Spurgeon fervently denounced the liberal influences upon Dissenting theology. This is followed by a consideration of how Spurgeon comments on the theological "divergence" of her tradition through Bunyan's

allegory (*TYA* 28). Second, this chapter examines how Spurgeon relies on Bunyan's character of Evangelist to shape her representation of her Fund and her work as ministerial wife. Echoing the work of Evangelist, one who guides the pilgrim by "pointing with his finger" toward the "shining light," Spurgeon declares her Fund operates as a "finger-post" directing Baptist Dissenters in a time of doctrinal doubt and persecution (Bunyan 11, *TYA* 28). In doing so she draws on the imagery and authority of Bunyan to legitimize her work as both book distributor and ministerial wife. Finally, I consider Spurgeon's comparison of her Fund's work to the second part of Bunyan's allegory, the pilgrimage and agency of the Puritan woman, Christiana.

The dissertation concludes by returning to contemporary representations of Spurgeon's work. This introductory chapter argues Spurgeon's life and writing has been defined and limited by her position as wife, as "help-meet." In the conclusion I examine one of the recent publications on her work, a children's book. I propose the text, a short illustrated picture book, provides a rare portrayal of Spurgeon's life; one that recognizes and validates her diverse textual work as that of an independent, industrious woman writer.

Chapter Two:
"The old guides and teachers will be again sought after": Dissenting Textuality and the Agency of Puritan Books

A pile of old books…are worse than useless to [the Book Fund]…the mere semblance of a feast…the Book Fund seeks to convey the richest and most substantial mental sustenance…any of the Puritan Divines ~ Spurgeon

I. "Books full of the glorious gospel": Spurgeon's Puritan Fund

Within the first few months of the Fund's operation Spurgeon received numerous requests for her husband's text, *Lectures To My Students*, as well as "many kind donations" of money from readers of CH. Spurgeon's periodical (*TY* 10). With the added funds and increased demand Spurgeon began to send a selection of CH. Spurgeon's popular titles. By the following year distribution expanded to include works by various authors, in part due to the generosity of readers and CH. Spurgeon's "good" publishers who allowed her to "purchase [texts] on such liberal terms" (13). As noted in chapter one, Spurgeon confirms the Fund was initiated by her own recognition, not her husband's, of the ministerial need for preaching material. And here, early in her reports, Spurgeon establishes herself, not Charles, as the arbiter of ministerial texts. She determines, from her own theological experience, knowledge of Reformed doctrine, and sermon preparation alongside CH. Spurgeon, what material will be useful to God's men. She also sets clear parameters with a firm statement as to what sort of books qualify for distribution: "The Book Fund aims at furnishing the bare bookshelves of poor Pastors…with standard works of Theology by various authors; books full of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ" (*TY* 45). Following this declaration she refers to a quote by CH. Spurgeon to explain what texts are "standard" and necessary for the minister. According to CH. Spurgeon, preachers must "read

good suggestive books" specifically, they ought to "*reach down [into]…the Puritans*" (*TY* 46; italics original).

The texts CH. Spurgeon suggests are works written by Reformed Protestant authors and theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth century that were republished and revived by Dissenters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[55] The Puritan writers were defined by both their theology and their desire for further Reformation within the Church of England. Most Puritans embraced "a particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism" and though the Church of England was "widely regarded as a Reformed church" the Puritans sought a "further reformation" (Coffey and Lim 3). They believed the Church had retained too many elements of late medieval Catholicism, such as formal liturgy and an elaborate hierarchy of bishops (Coffey and Lim 3). The zeal and intensity of their theology and their attempts to further reform the Church set them apart from other sixteenth-century Protestants and allowed them to create their own "godly identity" (Coffey and Lim 3, 4). The Puritans embraced and defended the doctrine of Reformed theology, strongly rooted in Calvinism.[56] This theological tradition emphasizes the "primacy of Scripture over church tradition," as well as the sovereignty of God, predestination, and justification through faith (Wallace 206). The Bible was not only central to Puritan theology, but it was at the heart of their worship, personal devotion, and spiritual life. Puritanism was a "religion of the Word, and the preaching and reading of the Bible were central to their faith" (Coffey and Lim 2). Although many Dissenting groups in the mid to late

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[55] See the footnote in the introduction to chapter one for a definition of "Puritan."

[56] Reformed theology began in Swiss and Rhineland cities with Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, Martin Bucer and John Calvin, all of whom agreed with Luther in his affirmation of justification by grace through faith, his insistence on Scripture over church tradition, and his attack upon transubstantiation and the sacrificial character of the Mass. Also, like Luther, they made no break with the principal creeds of the ancient church, retaining belief in the doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. Reformed theologians differed from Luther on the nature of Christ's presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist and pressed for further reform in matters of liturgy and church decoration than the Lutheran Reformation (Wallace 206-207).

nineteenth century were beginning to turn away from strict Calvinist Reformed doctrine, the Spurgeons both firmly embraced Puritan theology.[57]

Returning to the texts distributed by the Fund, Spurgeon replies to her husband's reading advice [to "reach" into the Puritans]: "what if the bookshelves are bare, and no Puritans can be reached down? This is a question which the Book Fund seeks to answer in the only satisfactory manner, by placing as a free gift in the hands of poor Pastors…nourishment for their brains" (*TY* 46). Here, in the early stages of the Fund, Spurgeon establishes a particular representation of Puritan texts. This is the material that the great preacher most highly recommends to the minister, it is rooted in the "glorious" gospel and is therefore "good" and ought considered the "standard" or definitive theology preachers should rely upon (*TY* 46). Spurgeon suggests that Puritan literature is helpful to ministers because it provides a particular "nourishment" (46). Additionally, she proposes that this Puritan "food" is not merely a wise suggestion by her husband, but it is "absolutely necessary" (46). To further emphasize the need for this specific textual food, Spurgeon compares the Puritan book to a basic requirement of life: Puritan texts are "nourishment…as absolutely necessary to mental vigour as food…is essential to physical existence" (*TY* 46). By establishing an atmosphere of urgency through the "famine" of books and representing the Puritan text as a vital agent of nutriment Spurgeon lays the foundation for her primary motif, the imagery and language of sustenance.[58] In doing so she represents her herself as a crucial "suppl[ier]" or purveyor of textual nourishment (*TY* 242). An image that, as I

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[57] The historical context of nineteenth-century Dissenting Puritanism is further examined below following the chapter argument.

[58] In chapter three, section "Ministerial Hunger and the Defense Against Heresy," I provide further historical context to Spurgeon's portrayal of ministerial hunger, specifically the financial and theological hardship of nineteenth-century Dissenting preachers.

suggested in chapter one, she relies upon to represent her work and the agency possible for the ministerial wife.

a. "Musty [books]…are worse than useless": The "Puritan Divines" of the Fund

Given CH. Spurgeon's extensive dependence upon Puritan Reformed theology, he firmly urges young ministers to "dig" into Puritan texts for their pulpit preparation. CH. Spurgeon not only admired the Puritans, but he "was completely molded and fashioned by [the] spiritual giants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Bacon 101).[59] CH. Spurgeon's dedication to Puritanism shaped his own ministry and, I argue, also directly influenced Susannah's work, particularly her selection of literature for the Fund. CH. Spurgeon's theology and preaching was so thoroughly steeped in Puritan doctrine and literature that his contemporaries suggested he "knew more about Puritanism than any of the Puritans themselves. His vast learning consisted almost entirely of this kind of erudition, and in this field he was one of the greatest of masters" (*Christian Commonwealth* quoted in Fullerton 195). He was so dedicated to Puritanism that his funeral (February, 1892) was declared to be "the conclusion of Puritan influence" (Murray 185).

It was CH. Spurgeon's focus on the authority of Scripture that securely aligned him with Puritan doctrine. For, "what was distinctive [about the Puritans] was the Puritan emphasis on the exclusivity and absoluteness of God's word" (Betteridge). Significantly, it is this "distinctiveness," the commitment to the Word-centred Calvinist theology of the Puritan tradition, that set both Charles's and Susannah's ministries apart from, even counter to, their Dissenting contemporaries, many of whom were beginning to doubt the historical reliability and infallibility of the Bible. CH. Spurgeon's strict reliance on the accuracy of Scripture stood against the mid nineteenth-century liberal leanings within the Baptist faith, specifically the shift

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[59] According to the list of Puritan books in CH. Spurgeon's personal library, available at the Spurgeon Archive (archive.spurgeon.org/fsl/puritans.php), he owned over 150 Puritan texts.

away from Calvinistic approaches to Scripture and toward new theories of creation and eternal punishment. Likewise, Spurgeon's Book Fund distributed Puritan books precisely when "Puritan literature [was] so greatly at a discount" since many ministers were doubting the Dissenting Reformed theology of the past and embracing "modern" approaches to Scripture (*TYA* 29).[60]

Given the titles distributed by the Fund it is clear that Spurgeon shared her husband's appreciation for and dedication to Puritan literature. Spurgeon does not list every text she distributes, but she mentions a selection of the titles in her reports and her letters from ministers also provide some insight into what texts they received. Referring to the appended chart (Appendix 2) she distributed at least twenty different texts written by her husband. In light of CH. Spurgeon's reliance on Puritan principles, the sermons and instructions in these texts are thoroughly rooted in Puritan Reformed theology. In fact, one of CH. Spurgeon's texts distributed by the Fund, *Illustrations and Meditations or Flowers from a Puritan's Garden* (1883), consists solely of Puritan illustrations and quotes. The text draws on the works of "the great Puritan" Thomas Manton, one of the seventeenth-century authors CH. Spurgeon held in high regard (vi). CH. Spurgeon admired many of the Puritan authors in the nineteenth-century Dissenting canon and, as examined in the following chapter, he favoured three particular divines: Thomas Brooks, Thomas Watson, and John Gill, all of whom shaped how both he and Susannah Spurgeon represent biblical and textual agency.

Turning to the list of other works Spurgeon distributed, it is evident that although the authors vary, all of the material is influenced by Puritan theology. Spurgeon not only had access to her husband's vast collection of Puritan literature, but she also distributed a number of the

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[60] The Dissenting historical context of the Fund will be further examined following the chapter argument below.

titles in her Fund, including works by Thomas Watson, John Gill, Matthew Henry and Richard Baker, all of whom were widely re-published in the nineteenth century. Significantly, in her reports Spurgeon informs her readers that she is able to distribute Puritan works which were "once valuable and expensive" primarily because they have now, in the 1880s, fallen out of popularity and become "so reduced in price" (*TYA* 29). Here, Spurgeon is not simply mentioning a convenient dip in the cost of books she intends to distribute. Rather, as noted throughout this dissertation, Spurgeon's Fund operates during a period of significant theological doubt and change within the Dissenting tradition; specifically, a movement away from Calvinist Puritan ideals of the past and toward emerging ideas of science and biblical interpretation. This historical shift shapes how and why Spurgeon's Fund operates and, more specifically, how she represents the books she distributes.

In addition to works of seventeenth-century Puritan authors, Spurgeon also sends material by nineteenth-century Dissenting theologians and ministers who rely heavily on Puritan, Baptist, theology. She distributes works by Charles Hodge; a Presbyterian Calvinist, Henry Fish, a Baptist theologian, and Robert Bertram; a Congregational minister who often drew on Puritan doctrine. Unsurprisingly, many of the Puritan theologians of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries were male authors. Spurgeon, however, also distributes and celebrates the work of Frances Ridley Havergal, one of the few female authors whose writing firmly embraces Puritan Reformed theology.[61] Havergal, a writer of poetry, hymns, and devotional literature, was raised reading the Puritans in her father's library and she embraced "the theology of [John Bunyan's] *Pilgrim's Progress*" (Calhoun). On the rare occasion Spurgeon lists a distributed title she often includes a sentence or two regarding the value of the author's book, why the text might

[61] When Havergal died CH. Spurgeon declared it was a "great loss of the church" for she was the "last and loveliest of our modern poets" (quoted in Calhoun).

be helpful to preachers. After mentioning her distribution of Havergal's works (including *The Five Royal Books* and *Kept For the Master's Use*) she includes an entire paragraph describing the "grace" and "power" of her writing. Spurgeon particularly notes how Havergal's text will perform upon ministers by leading them "to consecrate body, soul, and spirit anew to His service and His cause!" (*TY* 80). Spurgeon's portrayal of Havergal's work suggests the value of a text, and the work it performs, has no relation to the author's gender. Significantly, she declares: "I intend, as long as I can afford it, to put [Havergal's books]…into every parcel I send out from the Book Fund" (80). Here, early in Spurgeon's own textual work, she represents a Dissenting woman's writing as providing valuable guidance to male preachers, even beyond that of works by male theologians. Foreshadowing her distribution of her own work, *Ten Years*; a text she boldly suggests embodies the agency to "refresh His saints, and strengthen the faith of His servants" (*TY* 354).

A thorough examination of Spurgeon's reports confirms that the titles she distributed are, as she suggests, the "nourishment" of the Puritan tradition. However, should any reader doubt her Puritan mission, five years into the Fund's operation Spurgeon firmly reiterates that she will not distribute any sort of "old books" (*TY* 114). In her 1880 report she chastises readers, though she suggests she is doing so "as tenderly as possible," for donating "useless" and musty" texts to the Fund. Spurgeon bluntly states that "such presents are worse than useless to me" (114). Some of the books she received are obviously less helpful to the minister, such as" French Grammar and Exercises," however, others, including" some ancient 'Sermons,'" could, one might imagine, be useful to a poor preacher. Yet Spurgeon is clear these donated books are "valueless volumes" (114). To further emphasize the uselessness of the texts she proclaims: "I am often puzzled how to get rid of the encumbrances!" (114). Returning to the metaphor of sustenance she explains

why these books "could never feed [Pastors'] minds"; they are a "mere semblance of a feast" and "mock their eager hunger" (114). Spurgeon's strong rebuke of the books she's received and her depiction of the texts as awful "rubbish" suggests she has strict qualifications. By representing the Fund as distributing only "good" Puritan books, and strongly rebuking any other text, Spurgeon further represents herself, audaciously, as an adjudicator of ministerial literature. While firmly denying other material she confirms her authority with a rhetorical question: "Now, what could my poor Pastors care for rubbish such as this?" (114). Though she has the support of Charles, Spurgeon confirms she determines what books "her" ministers ought to be reading.

Lest her readers forget, Spurgeon reminds them again within the same report that," the Book Fund seeks to convey the richest and most substantial mental substance" (*TY* 114). Therefore, she accepts only donations of "standard works of sound theology," which are, of course, "any of the Puritan Divines" (*TY* 114-115). In her second volume of reports Spurgeon continues to emphasize the distribution of Puritan texts, further declaring the Fund will give *no* other material: "solid old-fashioned, Scriptural, Puritanic theology *alone* goes forth from the Book Fund shelves" (*TYA* 28; italics added). Again, in a later report, she reiterates that "one of the most prominent features of the Book Fund, during its eighteen years of existence, has been…the unwavering adherence, in the selection of books, to those which best set forth the teachings of the Puritan faith" (*TYA* 245). She explains that Puritan texts are particularly helpful to ministers because they provide them with "scriptural expositions," pulpit preparation, and "nourishment" (245). Therefore, she also asserts Puritan books ought to be "prized far beyond the [material written by] preachers" or theologians "of the present day" (*TYA* 29). Here Spurgeon declares the value of the Puritan book and why it is imperative for the Dissenting

minister. In doing she also represents her Fund, and herself, as standing against, even "beyond," contemporary "present day" liberal theology.

II. "I supply [ministers]…food": Chapter Argument

Having established the Book Fund as firmly tied, in its inception and throughout twenty years of operation, to the "old-fashioned" Divines, the focus of this chapter is to provide context to the Fund's "unwavering adherence" to Puritanism and to Spurgeon's representation of her Fund, and herself, as a "suppl[ier]" of Puritan nourishment (*TYA* 28). First, an examination of the historical context of Puritanism within Dissent provides insight into the theological shift that Spurgeon and her Fund operate against.[62] By representing her Fund as a distributor of Puritan books, texts "prized far beyond" other theological work, Spurgeon is not only seeking support for her Fund, but she is simultaneously promoting Puritan Reformed doctrine at a significant moment in Nonconformist history when many Dissenters were, in fact, turning *away* from Puritan theology. Spurgeon's negative depiction of other religious books, those "worse than useless" texts, also reflects this theological shift. Therefore, a brief overview of the Dissenting movement away from Puritanism provides a necessary frame of reference for Spurgeon's attempt to promote and idealize Puritan texts.

Second, I argue Spurgeon relies on an established language of agency, drawn from Dissenting textuality, in order to represent the Puritan book as an object and agent of transformation and immense power. This in turn allows her to suggest Puritan literature is the ideal and "absolutely necessary" nourishment for not only the minister, but all Dissenters. Examining the historical influences that shaped Dissenting textuality, from the divine power

[62] The challenges to Dissenting, particularly Baptist, doctrine will be further examined in an analysis of the Down-Grade Controversy in chapter four.

attributed to the first English Bible in the sixteenth century to the transformative effects of tracts distributed by nineteenth-century religious tract societies, provides context to Spurgeon's reliance upon the language and imagery of agency in her representation of the Puritan text. Spurgeon draws on and adapts a number of metaphors throughout the history of Dissenting textuality in order to portray the Puritan book, and in turn, her Puritan Fund, as a divine agent and the only sustenance that can satisfy the Dissenting minister's needs.

Finally, I argue that in Spurgeon's representation of her Fund and empowered Puritan texts she confirms her position as ministerial wife is defined not only by her relation to her husband. As pastoral wife she supports and distributes Charles's material, but she also performs, simultaneously, as a "supplier" or purveyor of Puritan agents; work that audaciously challenges the rising doctrine of *male* preachers. In doing so she "procures, provides, or supplies…food or other material necessities" not to needy women or children, but to poor ministers ("purveyor"). In her reports she defines herself, not just the Fund, as a provider of textual food: She declares: "*I* supply [ministers]…food" (*TY* 242) and "*my* work" is "feed[ing]…His fainting servants" (*TY* 242, 424; italics added). She herself is the "suppl[ier]" of strong meat" (*TYA* 393, *TYA* 28). Historically, the term also refers to an individual "responsible for the provision of necessities to an army, city, etc" ("purveyor"). Spurgeon portrays herself as embracing a necessary responsibility and providing textual aid to God's army. Given that the few studies of Spurgeon primarily represent her life and work as an appendage to Charles it is significant that at the beginning of the reports she establishes herself not simply as an advocate of her husband's work, but as a minister of ministers, providing aid to Dissenting preachers.[63] Likewise, the Fund is not

[63] As noted in chapter one, the few studies of Spurgeon present, and minimize, her life and work as simply "help" for her husband. The first reference to Spurgeon after her death introduces her as "the lady who would be a true 'help-meet 'to the popular preacher" (Ray 122).

"Charles Spurgeon's Book Fund" for the promotion of his material, but rather, as I argue throughout this chapter, Spurgeon represents her organization as a Puritan Book Fund, operated by a Puritan woman, to "furnish" bookshelves and promote Reformed Puritan theology.[64] In doing so she re-imagines the work and agency possible for the minister's wife.

III. "Old fashioned…Theology": Dissenting Liberalism and the Context of the Fund

The seventeenth-century Puritans were particularly dissatisfied with the "prevailing theological and ecclesiological state of the English church" and they sought to "purify" or reform the church "in line with the precepts of Calvinist theology" (Cambers *Godly* 13). They were not united on all doctrinal points and there were a number of "divergent dissenting streams" within Puritanism with differing views regarding issues such as baptism and ecclesiastical polity (Coffey and Lim 5). However, the seventeenth-century divines embraced similar overarching beliefs and Reformed doctrine and were defined by their reliance on the infallibility and authority of the Bible. Thus, "Bible reading was at the heart of Puritan spiritual life (Coffey and Lim 2, Hambrick-Stowe 203). Historians of English Puritanism often consider the end of the seventeenth century, following the 1689 Act of Toleration that allowed Dissenting freedom, to be the conclusion of the age of Puritanism. Although there has been extensive historiographical debate as to whether Puritanism was a coherent movement, there is some consensus as to the extent to which Puritan ideas were transmitted beyond the seventeenth century (Betteridge). Studies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dissent note the influence of Puritan Reformed theology upon Dissenting tradition; however, scholars of the Puritan legacy tend to overlook the persistency and longevity of Puritan religion (Coffey 337). Puritan ideals became incorporated

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[64] A selection of references to the Book Fund completely omit Spurgeon's name and imply the Fund is the work of Charles. For example, in a brief biography of Spurgeon, published in 2003, the Book Fund appears as "The Pastor's Book Fund," singularly referring to the pastor Charles Spurgeon (Theobald 152).

into the broader evangelical Protestant tradition and Puritan texts "helped to feed revivals" in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries (Coffey 337). Therefore, Puritan theology remained at the heart of most evangelical English Dissenting denominations, specifically the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Quakers, and Baptists, who "celebrated their seventeenth-century forbearers, and kept alive their historical memory" (Coffey 333).

The leaders of the first Protestant revival, including George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, were influenced by the Reformed doctrine of the Puritans and they promoted a "return" to the "good old puritanical writings" (Murray 135, 144). The revivalists also republished "an astonishing number" of seventeenth-century Puritan classics. The works of Thomas Brooks, Richard Rogers, William Perkins, and Richard Sibbes were "reprinted and in great numbers quickly bought and studied" (Coffey 335, Murray 143). Though Puritan ideals were celebrated by Dissenters in the eighteenth century, it was in the nineteenth century "that the reputation of the Puritans flourished as never before" in both literature and culture (Coffey 336).

In the nineteenth century memories of the "Puritan Revolution" shaped popular politics, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was canonized, and "there was buoyant demand for the classics of Puritan devotional literature" (Coffey 337). The nineteenth-century Dissenting Puritan "canon" includes the complete works of a variety of seventeenth-century divines such as: Anglican theologian Richard Sibbes, church leader and theologian Richard Baxter, theologian and academic John Owen, clergyman Thomas Manton, minister Thomas Brooks, theologian Thomas Goodwin, author and vicar George Swinnock, theologian and chaplain John Howe, and bishop Edward Reynolds (Coffey *Godly* 337). A number of nineteenth-century authors also published collections of the seventeenth-century Puritan writers, or "authorities," as John Brown, the author of *The English Puritans* (1912), defines them. The Victorian collections glorified the

Puritans as "a race of men of whom the world was not worthy" (J. Brown vii). They declared the Puritans ought to be revered since Dissenting "religious liberty, and…Christian privileges, are to be ascribed to them more than to any other body of men that England ever produced" (J. Brown viii). According to Benjamin Brook, the nineteenth-century author of *The Lives of the Puritans*, Puritan texts were promoted and dramatized for their examples of "orthodox principles, Christian tempers, and holy duties…religion shining forth in real life, subduing the corruptions of human nature" (vi). These collections and the re-publication of seventeenth-century Puritan texts flourished throughout the early and mid nineteenth centuries as Dissenters carried Puritan godliness and discipline into their churches and missionary societies (Cambers 337).

Despite the Puritans' enduring religious legacy, by the late nineteenth century Puritan theology and influence within evangelical Dissent "was being eroded…by rising theological liberalism" (Coffey 338). The primary liberal movements were trifold and included the emergence of scientific discoveries, criticisms of the Bible, and, in turn, a growing rejection of Calvinist Reformed theology. Many of the ideas emerged mid-century, but by the 1870s -1890s religious uncertainty had "spread widely" throughout Dissenting churches (McLeod 179). New approaches in science, including Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection, opposed traditional biblical ideas of creation. The Bible was the foundation of Dissenting theology and considered to be inspired and infallible, yet emerging modes of biblical interpretation, specifically Higher Criticism, reduced much of the Bible to "mere speculation" (Holmes 346).[65] Therefore, "with its authority undermined the churches' assurance that they had

[65] Higher Criticism began in Germany and spread throughout Dissent in mid nineteenth-century Britain. In this approach Scripture was not considered "the authentic and infallible record of God's true Word as expressed in his revelatory activity; rather, the Bible was viewed as a book of primary sources" (Bush & Nettles 188). Significantly, Higher Criticism suggested the Bible contained the word of God, but that it no longer *was* the Word of God (Holmes 346).

a message direct from God, lost something of its credibility" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 28). With the challenges to biblical theology and the accuracy of the Bible evangelical Dissenters began to question other aspects of their Reformed doctrine, specifically the ideas they struggled to defend, such as eternal punishment. In light of this theological instability evangelical Dissenting traditions of the late nineteenth century, "first Presbyterians and then Congregationalists and Particular Baptists," began to modify, and in part reject, the Puritan Calvinist theology that previously defined their faith (Watts 43).

Though many Dissenters adjusted their theology in response to contemporary advancements in science and knowledge, there were some, particularly in the Baptist tradition, who considered the modern adaptions heretical and remained firmly tied to Puritan Reformed principles. Significantly, it was Charles Spurgeon who initiated the strongest reaction against the liberalization of Dissent as he publicly "denounced the liberal theological trends – a tendency to neglect the atonement, downplay hell and dismiss other biblical teachings" (Bebbington "Baptist"). Beginning with "an attack[…] on his own denomination" CH. Spurgeon published a series of articles throughout the 1880s warning of false doctrine within Baptist churches (Larsen 247). He proclaimed: "too many ministers…are toying with the deadly cobra" of 'modern thought'" (*Baptist Quarterly* quoted in Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 65). CH. Spurgeon argued Dissenting doctrine was sliding from Calvinist truth and on the "down-grade." In early 1887 a heated theological debate eventually erupted, known as the "Downgrade Controversy," between CH. Spurgeon and his fellow Baptist theologians who were willing to alter their Reformed theology.[66] CH. Spurgeon ultimately left the Baptist Union but he continued to denounce liberal theology until his death in 1892.

[66] The Down-Grade and Spurgeon's representation of "modern thought" is the focus of chapter four.

It is in this context, the atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty within Dissent, the rise of liberal theology and science, and the beginning of the turn away from Calvinism toward new approaches to scripture, that Spurgeon's Puritan Book Fund emerges. Spurgeon began distributing Puritan literature in 1877 when the liberal movements had already taken hold and Dissenters were questioning Puritan theology. It would have been unsurprising if Spurgeon distributed Puritan texts during the mid-century renewal. At that time Dissenters were re-publishing and celebrating Puritan divines, such as Brown and Brook, who instructed readers to "follow them as guides" (Brook x). However, Spurgeon declared her Book Fund would only distribute the "absolutely necessary" and "good" theology of the Puritans when many Dissenting leaders and chapel members were questioning their Reformed beliefs, shifting away from Puritan ideals, and embracing theology that opposed the Puritan authorities (*TY* 45-46).

As Dissenting liberalization increased throughout the 1880s and Charles Spurgeon initiated his revolt against the theological changes (1887), Spurgeon began her own attack against liberal doctrine through her Book Fund. It is in her 1887 report, at the peak of the Down-Grade Controversy, that she firmly declares "in these days of doubt…Puritan theology *alone*" will "go forth from the Book Fund shelves" (*TYA* 28). She also, specifically, instructs her readers to "invest as largely as possible" in "Puritan literature" for it is "prized far beyond" the books of "modern thought" (28-9). Though she is aligned with Charles's opposition to liberal theology, Spurgeon does not suggest her Fund is distributing Puritan literature to support her husband's views, but rather, she represents the Fund as fighting alongside him, in a battle of books that "contend[s] violently against 'these new gods'" (*TYA* 28). She is evidently aware of the challenges to Dissenting Reformed theology and in response she explains that the Fund "stands steadfast" and helps "wayfarers," Dissenters turning from Puritan theology, find "the

right road" (*TYA* 28). Spurgeon consistently portrays her work as "steadfast" in support of Puritan ideals and as an independent ministry, aligned with her husband's interests, but operated under her direction.

As noted above, Spurgeon suggests Puritan literature is not only "solid" and "scriptural," but is, now, also "old fashioned" (*TYA* 28). The "once valuable" doctrines are not simply out of style, but "Puritan literature is so greatly at a discount" due to the rise of liberal theology, or as Spurgeon suggests, "in consequence of the spread of 'modern thought'" (29). Her words echo the contemporary context of Dissent: "the old theology [of Puritanism]…had grown so weak" and "the liberal view of progress…prevailed" (Murray 210). If Spurgeon's Fund emerged earlier in the century it would have been considered simply another Dissenting celebration of Puritanism. It also would have been much easier for her to gain support for the distribution of Puritan books, re-published popular texts earlier in the century. However, Spurgeon's Puritan Fund operates against the grain. How does the Dissenting shift away from Puritanism influence Spurgeon's representation of the Fund and the texts she distributes? Having celebrated a doctrine that is falling out of popularity within Dissent, and declared that her Fund is rooted in these "old-fashioned" principles, how can Spurgeon garner support for her work from Dissenting readers? How might she convince Dissenting ministers that the only books they need are these "despised volumes"? How can she re-shape the reputation of Puritan texts from outdated, "reduced in price" tomes to "the best and choicest of theological works" (*TY* 314)?

IV. "Weapons of war": The Diverse Agency of the Puritan Text

To emphasize the necessity of her Fund and the value of the Puritan text, I argue Spurgeon not only extols Puritan literature as the most helpful and "prized" material for Dissenting preachers, but she strategically represents these texts as embodying a divine agency

that sets them apart from other, particularly liberal, theological material. In doing so she also implies that her work, as the "supplier" of such books, is equally necessary. As a minister's wife she supports her husband by sending out his material, but by representing his texts and the Puritan books she distributes as objects of life-saving sustenance and immense power, she in turn validates her position as a purveyor of divine provision. Thus, unlike the "help-meet," her self-representation is not defined by her association to, or support of, Charles, but rather the independent work she performs and aid she supplies. Though it may not be preaching, it is, as Spurgeon suggests, nevertheless, significant and "needed" work for the furtherance of God's kingdom (*TYA* 28).

Spurgeon represents Puritan texts as providing a myriad of spiritual benefits. Throughout her Fund reports the books appear as extensions of God's spirit, "messengers…with God-given power and unction," capable of inspiring, teaching, and transforming not only the unsaved, but ministers and all believers (*TYA* 23). Through this representation Spurgeon suggests her Fund is not simply sending out "old-fashioned" books, but divine Puritan agents that have "the evident approval and seal of God's Spirit" as the" breath of the Spirit of God…clothes the words with power" (*TYA* 73, *TY* 164-5). In addition to spiritual power, Spurgeon represents the Puritan text as an object of sustenance: a "rich feast [for] the longing soul" (*TY* 112), "food to a hungry soul" (*TY* 164), and" mental food for preachers" (*TYA* 393). In order to create a sense of urgency and necessity, both for the work of the Fund and the re-establishment of the Puritan tradition within Dissent, Spurgeon represents the minister's need for books as a severe textual famine.[67]
She suggests ministers are suffering from immense "book-hunger" and are "hungering and thirsting for the refreshments of good books, either for the maintenance of their own spiritual

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[67] Chapter three provides an analysis of Spurgeon's language of sustenance and reliance on biblical and Puritan metaphors.

strength, or for the direct instruction and profit of their people" (*TY* 152, *TYA* 71). By establishing an atmosphere of textual starvation Spurgeon strategically represents Puritan texts as the necessary aid and only sustenance that can satisfy this hunger. Therefore, the "good books" that will feed ministers' cravings are the "old Puritan" books. For, these are the" best and choicest theological works" that provide "a glorious feast for the satiating of their own souls" (*TY* 314).

In Spurgeon's reports the agency and benefits of the Puritan text multiply beyond sustenance. The books not only feed the preacher's "mentally-famished" soul, but they also give him "refreshment of spirit in times of deep depression," "divine instruction," "renewed faith and hope," "golden rays of hope and encouragement," and "succour and support" (*TYA* 242, *TY* 146, *TY* 221, *TYA* 288, *TY* 249, *TY* 391). The books even perform as "weapons of war...against the powers of evil" (*TY* 171). The Puritan texts also travel as "swift messengers" that "carry light and gladness, and joy and thanksgiving" to ministers "far and wide" (*TY* 102). Additionally, the textual power is not only conferred upon the minister, but when distributed to missionaries the texts perform as "silent messengers of salvation and peace" that "attract and instruct the unlettered and ungodly" (*TYA* 70, *TYA* 347).[68] The books of the Fund are represented throughout Spurgeon's reports as living entities that "do their work silently yet surely," and they even "find their way into places where a so-called 'pious book' would not be tolerated" (*TY* 171, *TY* 340).

A selection of the language and imagery that Spurgeon relies upon in her representation of the the Puritan text, particularly in terms of conversion, is not unique to her. Similar language is evident in reports from the Religious Tract Society (RTS), "the largest evangelical publisher of general Christian literature in the middle and late nineteenth century" (Fyfe 25). The RTS

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[68] Refer to chapter one "Introduction to the Book Fund" for a discussion of the Fund's distribution of texts to missionaries.

reflects the "early nineteenth century evangelical[]" belief "that mass tract distribution would send out millions of 'silent messengers' to awaken the unregenerate" (Ledger-Lomas 332). The RTS was guided by the notion that tracts could circulate without human intervention and the tract's power to convert is represented through the language of divine agency (Hofmeyr "Books" 139). In the RTS reports a tract appears as "an evangelising agent among a heathen people" (*Eighty-First Annual Report* 157) and these "messengers" could bring about conversion and "arrest[..,] the bold sinner in his career of folly and vice" (*Proceedings* 415). The tracts not only carried a message, but also "actively disseminated it as 'silent preachers of righteousness'" (quoted in Stubenrauch 568). The RTS's reliance on this language of agency reflects the evangelical belief "that through the Bible alone the world could be converted"; however, it was also applied to "effect and dramatize circulation" (Hofmeyr "Books in Heaven" 142). The apparent divine power of tracts, which "was regularly demonstrated in the accounts of successful conversion that were published" both in the RTS reports and evangelical periodicals, solicited further support for the society's efforts (Fyfe 107). The language used by the RTS was focused on the Bible and biblical tracts and was specifically directed at the work of conversion. Spurgeon's reports, particularly in relation to the distribution of texts and sermons to missionaries, directly echo this textual agency evident in the RTS writings. Spurgeon records that the books distributed by the Fund are "silent messengers" that convert the unsaved by providing "a fountain of life to some perishing sinner" (*TYA* 70, 23). Like the RTS, Spurgeon dramatizes the circulation of her distributed texts that are represented as travelling "far and wide" to "distant heathen lands" to accomplish their work of conversion (*TY* 102, 302).

Spurgeon was certainly aware of the RTS's work, evident from her reference to the RTS as an "excellent Society" and as "dear friends" who twice donated texts to her Fund (*TY* 135). It

is not surprising, then, that in an effort to validate the work of the Fund, Spurgeon draws on the language of agency utilized by the RTS. Borrowing the metaphor of the text as "silent preacher" or "messenger," Spurgeon represents the work of her Fund in familiar language to her Dissenting readers. Many of whom would be aware of, and potentially supporters of, the largest evangelical tract society. By portraying her distributed texts and sermons as comparable to the RTS tracts, Spurgeon suggests the Puritan agent is equally powerful and necessary for the work of conversion. However, Spurgeon also adapts this established language of agency for her own purpose by applying the agency specifically to Puritan texts and not only for converting the unsaved, but for empowering the minister. Additionally, Spurgeon represents the agency of the Puritan text as strikingly diverse - it embodies the power to feed, instruct, encourage, and protect. She relies not only on contemporary representations of books and tracts, but also draws on a long tradition of textual agency that has roots in seventeenth-century Puritan modes of textuality. By tracing the development of this tradition I seek to provide context to Spurgeon's representation of Puritan texts and the various ways in which they perform upon the reader. I suggest she draws on a variety of tropes from this tradition and by incorporating her own images and metaphors she reworks the agency of the text for her own purpose: to validate the Fund and her own work as a textual "supplier," to emphasize the necessity of Puritan texts, and to encourage Dissenters to return to the godly Puritan tradition.

V. Dissenting Textuality and the History of Biblical and Textual Agency

a. "Inspired textual agency": Evangelical Textuality

A selection of nineteenth-century scholars (including Fyfe, Ledger-Lomas, and Stubenrauch) recognize that the RTS "attributed immense power" to tracts and represented them as embodying "exciting roles" as "silent preachers" and travellers (Fyfe 107, Stubenrauch 568).

However, there is little to no analysis of this agency in their studies or any suggestion that it might be part of a particular Protestant, or Dissenting form of textuality. In her examination of nineteenth-century Dissenting missions Isabel Hofmeyr provides what appears to be the first and only suggestion that Dissenting representations of the Bible, tracts, and *Pilgrim's Progress* embody a divine power that reflects an evangelical "theory of textuality" ("Inventing 22). Hofmeyr classifies this theory as "inspired textual agency" ("Inventing" 27). Most Dissenters, aside from Unitarians but including Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists, embraced evangelical principles and their beliefs typically "derived from an Evangelical worldview" (Bebbington 3).[69] This form of textuality emphasizes the text's ability to convert and perform the work of evangelism. Hofmeyr suggests that in this theory of textuality "documents have an astonishing capacity to 'seize 'and 'capture 'readers and bring about radical transformations and conversions in them" ("Metaphorical" 105). Therefore, this approach to texts entails "magical notions of textual agency" (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 17) and represents texts as objects with "extraordinary powers of possession and enchantment" (Hofmeyr "Globe" 90). The tracts appear as "mini-missionaries which could travel by themselves and seize those they encountered and transform them utterly" (Hofmeyr "Books in Heaven" 141).

This language of divine agency is typically applied to "the Bible and religious tracts" in the context of missionary work, such as evangelical book societies (like the RTS), with a focus on converting the unsaved (Hofmeyr "Realism" 125). Hofmeyr also observes this agency is evident in relation to nineteenth-century representations of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Because of the text's primary role in missionary work it was often portrayed through "notions of inspired textual agency" (Hofmeyr "Inventing" 27). Hofmeyr provides an invaluable introduction to and

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[69] Evangelical theology emphasizes the centrality of the Bible and the significance of conversion, the doctrine of the atoning death of Christ on the cross, and the belief that the gospel needs to be actively expressed (Bebbington 3-4).

evidence of this form of textuality; however, she acknowledges that nineteenth-century Dissenting, and particularly evangelical, ideas about language and texts are "currently little understood" ("Books in Heaven" 141). On three different occasions in her work Hofmeyr emphasizes this gap in the scholarship. She suggests that despite the "extensive[] studies[s]" of "the political, social, and religious aspects" of evangelicalism and the "much debated" examinations of Protestant theology, patterns of conversion, and missionary work, scholars of nineteenth-century religion have essentially ignored evangelical and Dissenting theories of textual agency (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 19," Inventing" 22). It is not surprising, then, that the features of this form of nineteenth-century textuality are "little understood" ("Books in Heaven" 141). Aside from reports of the agency of Bunyan's text in the missions field and the RTS's representation of the tract converting the unsaved, there are few primary examples of nineteenth-century "inspired textual agency." Spurgeon's two Book Fund volumes, in which she represents the myriad power and performance of the Puritan text through the language of agency, are therefore invaluable contributions to the present and future study of Dissenting textuality.

I attempt here to respond to Hofmeyr's implicit call for further study of the development of evangelical textuality and textual agency; a seemingly forgotten, yet significant aspect of nineteenth-century textual history of Dissent. Though I seek to shed new light on this model of textuality, I also suggest studies of nineteenth-century Protestant reading and textuality would greatly benefit from further work recovering the history of this tradition. As mentioned above, my primary intent is to provide context to Spurgeon's extensive use and, I argue, adaptation of, this tradition of textuality for her own purpose. Namely, to represent the diverse agency of the Puritan text and, in turn, the necessity of the text for ensuring, through the preaching and teaching of the minister, the revival and continuance of Puritan theology within Dissent. In the

following section I will examine textual approaches that influenced Dissenting textuality and Spurgeon's representation of the Puritan text - signalling when she draws on, or diverges from, particular features or influences.

b. The "magical power of the Word": Sixteenth-Century Biblical Agency

Three principles represent the foundation of nineteenth-century evangelical Dissenting textual agency: the book as printed object, the written text itself, and the apparent power or agency that extends from the object, seemingly through the text, to the reader. Therefore, in order to examine the early development of this form of Dissenting textuality I turn to early print culture, the beginning of mass print in the sixteenth century, and particularly the printing of the English Bible. In her brief study of evangelical textuality Hofmeyr signals this significant connection as she suggests records of the extraordinary agency of the text are in part "driven by the heady combination of the novelty and power of mass print being applied to texts considered to have religious and spiritual authority" ("Globe" 90). Hofmeyr also references Stephen Greenblatt, who, in *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, confirms this spiritual power and agency was particularly evident with the printing of the English Bible, "a document that made available the mystery of God's word in the vernacular and in print" (quoted in Hofmeyr "Globe" 90). Therefore, from its inception, "the bible was assumed to have miraculous and compulsive powers over its readers" (Hofmeyr "Globe" 90). Having only scratched the surface of the connection between early print culture and textual agency, Hofmeyr recognizes that the influences that shaped this theory of textuality need further study. It is here that I suggest we return to Greenblatt's text to further unpack the agency that sixteenth-century writers attributed to the English Bible.

William Tyndale's translation of the Bible was the first English Bible to draw directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts and the first to take advantage of the printing press. The printing of Tyndale's English New Testament, in 1525, contributed to a new perception of the Bible. The text, previously accessed only via the authority of the priests, was now the "voice of God speaking to them in English from its pages" (96). The persecution by the Catholic authorities that followed this first printed translation not only placed Bible-readers' lives in danger, but also "heightened the impact" and perceived power of the text. It was extraordinary to hold and read God's Word, but with the threat of persecution the experience reading the text "must have seemed overpowering, almost irresistible" (96). Sixteenth-century writers, including Tyndale and the Protestant reformer James Bainham, proclaimed that they were arming themselves with "the syllables of Scripture" and the English Bible was quickly "invested with the ability to control, guide, discipline, console, exalt, and punish" (97). Greenblatt also observes that sixteenth-century "testimonials to the magical power of the Word" were not merely "inflated rhetoric" (97). Rather, he suggests "we must take them at very close to the literal meaning: the printed English New Testament is, above all, *a form of power*" (97; italics original). I propose a similar approach in the analysis of Spurgeon's representation of Puritan texts. Though she does not suggest Puritan books are superior to the Bible, she does invest the texts with similar language and abilities. This extraordinary portrayal of the text's agency is not only to dramatize the appeal of Puritan literature, but, as Greenblatt suggests, it is also a depiction of the perceived true power of the text; the book as a divine object.

In light of the early representations of the power of the printed Bible the English writer and reformer, John Foxe, declared in 1567 that "the Lord began to work for his Church not with sword and target to subdue His exalted adversary, but with printing, writing, and reading"

(quoted in Greenblatt 98-99). The printed text itself and the experience of reading it was represented as God's direct action and inspiration; his interaction with His people. Therefore, for Protestants in the sixteenth century, the Bible was "the point of absolute, unwavering contact between God and man…a sacred text illuminated by faith" (Greenblatt 111). The leaders of the Reformation, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564), further promoted the Bible as an extension of God's presence. Significantly, they argued that the Scriptures "generated its own light for believers" through the power of the Holy Spirit (Greene 105). Therefore, a mediator or translator was no longer required, and *all* individuals now had access to the divine source. For the reformers, the Bible was an object that directly connected believers to God's power and the text "was not just a book to be read and studied, but a field of force which through the Holy Spirit could have a transforming effect on the lives of those who read it in faith" (Greene 105).[70]

Though the reformers were active three centuries prior to Spurgeon, her Puritan representation of biblical and textual agency is rooted in the Calvinist, Baptist tradition which relies on the theology and work of the sixteenth-century reformers. She, therefore, draws directly from their influence. In her reports Spurgeon not only refers to the Bible as "God's Words," but she echoes the reformers' declaration that biblical truth is accessible to all readers: "However dark and indistinct a [biblical] passage may at first sight appear to be, it will glow as with hidden fire when the Spirit of the Lord breathes upon it" (*TYA* 227). This illumination is also possible because the Bible is not merely an inanimate object. Drawing on the sixteenth-century fascination with and testimonial to the power of the printed Bible as God's direct contact with his people, Spurgeon likewise represents the text as "alive" with the power to "speak to

[70] For further analysis of the early reformers' representation of the Bible see *The People's Book: The Reformation and the Bible* edited by Jennifer Powell McNutt and David Lauber. InterVaristy Press, 2017.

your heart" because it is "the very voice of God Himself" (*TYA* 227). Spurgeon's representation of the Bible also informs her representation of Puritan texts.[71] Though Puritan literature is not considered the direct words of God, she portrays the texts as influenced by and reliant on Scripture; they are "full of the marrow and fatness of the gospel" (*TY* 314). Therefore, her depiction of Puritan texts draws on the language of agency from her representation of the Bible. Spurgeon suggests God "clothes the words [of the books] with power" and the Puritan texts she distributes have a "God-given power and unction" (*TY* 165, *TYA* 23). Thus, the books are able to perform various blessings and provide ministers with "needed illumination" (*TY* 221).

c. "Channels of Power": Seventeenth-Century Puritan Textual Agency

Continuing to trace the representation of biblical agency, I turn to John Bunyan (1628-1688), the prominent Dissenting Baptist Puritan of the seventeenth century. Bunyan's interaction with the Bible, recorded in his spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), further emphasizes and nuances the reformers' agency of the Word. In *Grace Abounding* Bunyan presents his conversion through an intense spiritual battle and throughout the text he portrays the Bible as "a site of intense power" (Hofmeyr "Realism" 125). Bunyan represents the Bible not only as an expression of God's voice, but also as an object so filled with God's presence that he can physically interact with it. By divine power the Bible is capable of speaking to Bunyan and also aggressively acting *upon* him: "Scripture…would call, as running after me," it "boulted both upon me," "looked…on me," "clapt me on the back," and "did work and struggle strangly in me" (paragraph 132, 166, 177, 157, 166). He also records softer, seemingly intimate interactions with the text as God's "words…dwell with me, talk with me, and comfort me over and over" (102). Bunyan anthropomorphizes the Bible as a "Book…[that] had

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[71] Chapter three provides further analysis of Spurgeon's representation of the Bible.

arms of grace so wide, that it could not onely inclose me, but many more besides" (159). The Scriptures also provide Bunyan with sustenance as he consumes the "sweetness" of the words and finds "great refreshment" from the promises (202, 217).[72] Here, Bunyan extends the sixteenth-century agency attributed to the Bible. The printed Word is not only representative of God's voice illuminating the minds of believers, but it is also a multi-layered extension of His power, vested with the agency to convict, pursue, comfort, and even feed readers.

Though this representation of the Bible's agency is particularly evident in Bunyan's work, scholars of the seventeenth century note that this "model of textuality" applied to the Bible "is not unique to Bunyan but generally underpins the way that evangelical Protestants understood the Word to work" (S. Brown 30). It is significant, here, to be reminded that Puritanism is particularly rooted in the Bible, arguably more so than any other form of Protestantism. As noted above, Reformation theology represents the printed Bible as the believer's immediate connection to God, "as if he spoke to the believer directly through the pages of the Bible" (Cambers *Godly* 2). Scholars of Puritanism argue that this association between the Word and God's immediate power "was particularly strong for Puritans because the believer was denied recourse to the wider material and sacramental repertoire open to Catholics and, to a lesser extent, mainstream Protestants" (Cambers *Godly* 2). Therefore, for the Puritans, the agency attributed to the Bible is two-fold: the holy book had "sacred power, both as a physical object and as a sacred text" (Cambers "Demonic" 10). As we observed in Bunyan's conversion narrative, the physical force of the book as object was often "indistinguishable from the sacred power of its words" (Cambers "Demonic" 16). Both forms of power vested in the Bible are

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[72] For further examples of Bunyan's interaction with and representation of Scripture refer to Maxine Hancock's insightful examination of *Grace Abounding* in *The Key in the Window: Marginal Notes in Bunyan's Narratives* 37-45.

strikingly evident in Puritan records of demon possession. In order to harness the power of biblical words, select passages would be read to the possessed individual with the belief that the divine text would ward off the evil spirit. However, the Puritans also relied on "the physical book as a weapon to defeat the devil" (Cambers "Demonic" 10). They would engage in a literal textual battle by sending the Bible, or bits of it, in the direction of the possessed who would then "tear the book or hurl it away" (Cambers *Godly* 106). Though this portrayal of the Bible appears to border on the quasi-magical or superstitious, both of which, ironically, would be condemned by any godly Puritan, in the context of the Puritan faith the Bible's physical power was considered alongside the agency of its sacred text. Therefore the Bible and the words within were "a kind of Protestant sacramental" (Cambers *Godly* 107).

The sixteenth-century reformers and seventeenth-century Puritans also represent the Bible as embodying a supreme agency above any text because of their belief in the infallibility, the lack of error and truthfulness, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. Scripture was "the Word" of God, quite literally, and was written by "divine inspiration" ("Calvinism"). The Bible was considered to be "the very Voice and Message of God to men; it was the infallible and authoritative work of the Holy Spirit" (Bacon 103). Therefore, since "the Bible is God's self-revelation to humankind," those who read the text could experience the presence and knowledge of God and they could be transformed (converted) by reading the words and through the Spirit of God acting upon them (Moir). The theological principles of scriptural infallibility and inspiration are foundational to the Reformed and Puritan representation of the Bible's agency and remain central to contemporary evangelical Protestant faith. The Puritan representation of the Bible is in part explained and supported by Protestant beliefs regarding how Scripture

operates; however, the agency that is attributed to other religious texts is, in some ways, more complex as it is not directly related to Protestant theology.

The textual agency referred to by Hofmeyr "extends beyond scripture to all spiritually efficacious books" such as seminal Dissenting texts as *Pilgrim's Progress* and "books of practical divinity, spiritual autobiography, instructive allegories" (S. Brown 28). In this form of textuality the books do not hold the authority of the Bible and are not considered the inspired word of God; however, they still reflect a similar power in their ability to influence and convert readers. This agency is present in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* as phrases or texts "not strictly from Scripture," such as Martin Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*, "have the force of authoritative word for Bunyan" (Hancock 39).

The extension of seemingly divine power is also evident in Dissenting textuality of the nineteenth century. As noted above, the Religious Tract Society portrays the texts and tracts they distribute as "preachers" that have "a powerful influence" upon the unsaved (*Proceedings* 419, 389). Although the Puritans and nineteenth-century Dissenters did not typically claim that the Holy Spirit inspired texts beyond Scripture, "they did assert that certain texts functioned to convey sacred influences" (C. Brown 8). As I've suggested, Spurgeon also extends such "sacred influence" to texts beyond the Bible. Like the Puritans and her Dissenting contemporaries she portrays her distributed texts as "channels of power" (*TYA* 127). However, it is the diversity of this agency and who it acts upon that is significant. Spurgeon's Puritan texts not only preach, but also feed, encourage, and defend- not only transforming the unsaved, but also the minister (*TYA* 127).

d. "A bright star amidst the darkness": Spurgeon and Puritan Textuality

As a Calvinist, Puritan, Baptist preacher the Bible was at the centre of Charles Spurgeon's life, anchoring his faith and ministry: "The Bible is the harbour where I can drop down my anchor, feeling certain it will hold a place where I can find sure footing; and, by the grace of God, from this confidence I shall never be moved" (quoted in Carter 24). He declared the Bible to be the inspired, infallible Word of God and like the reformers before him, CH. Spurgeon suggested the Bible was God's voice and point of contact to believers: "if you wish to know God, you must know his Word" (quoted in Carter 21). Most nineteenth-century Dissenting preachers would agree with him. In his representation of the Bible, CH. Spurgeon also relies heavily on the Baptist preacher he admired, John Bunyan. As noted above, Bunyan suggests the Scriptures chased him, "clapt" him, and struggled with him. CH. Spurgeon similarly declares that "the words of Scripture" would "bear me aloft or dash me down. Tear me in pieces or build me up" (quoted in Carter 21).[73] It is not surprising that the Bible is foundational to CH. Spurgeon or that he echoes the famous Baptist preacher before him. Though it is significant that CH. Spurgeon embraces and promotes Bunyan's particular, and at times peculiar, representation of the Bible's agency.

In nearly identical imagery, CH. Spurgeon's Scripture appears much like Bunyan's; it embodies God's power and is a living entity that he interacts with. Once again, it is not uncommon for a Dissenting preacher to refer to the Bible as "meat" or food that sustains the believer; however, CH. Spurgeon relies on Bunyan's specific portrayal of biblical sustenance through identical maternal imagery. In *Grace Abounding* Bunyan reveals his desire to "suck that

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[73] CH. Spurgeon also personifies the Bible as "a voice" that speaks to him: "This Bible is God's Bible, and when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, 'I am the book of God; man, read me. I am God's writing; open my leaf, for I was penned by God; read it, for he is my author, and you will see him visible and manifest everywhere'" ("The Bible").

sweetness and comfort" (70) from the Word and, likewise, CH. Spurgeon preaches that Scripture ought to "be sucked up into your very soul, till it saturates your heart!" (quoted in Carter 26). Notably, the maternal reference to "sucking" the Word is an image specifically tied to Puritan textuality in which Scripture is seen as "reproductive, the mother of all texts, giving birth to and nurturing faith and faithful subjects" (S. Brown "Reproductive Word" 27).[74] Therefore, CH. Spurgeon's representation of the Bible's agency, both through physical interaction and sustenance, not only reflects his reliance on, or as I suggested in chapter one, obsession with, Bunyan, but also confirms that CH. Spurgeon is drawing back to and promoting a seventeenth-century Puritan approach to the Bible. This is significant given that much of CH. Spurgeon's ministry was characterized by a defence of the authority of the Bible. By drawing on Bunyan's approach to Scripture CH. Spurgeon also emphasizes to his Baptist readers and listeners that belief in the Bible is central to their faith and in light of contemporary challenges to the Bible's authority, he reminds them that their understanding of the truth and reliability of the Bible is part of a larger Baptist tradition. By embracing liberal approaches to Scripture, which question the Bible's accuracy, Dissenters are also turning away from the established doctrine and authority of the Baptist Puritans they once held so dear.

CH. Spurgeon's reliance on Bunyan and the specific images and features of Baptist Puritan biblical agency also provides a significant point of connection to Susannah Spurgeon's representation of texts. As I argue in the next chapter, Spurgeon, like her husband, draws on aspects of Puritan textuality, particularly images and language of agency from Puritan authors she and CH. Spurgeon admired (Thomas Brooks, Thomas Watson, and John Gill). Though she

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[74] The maternal language and imagery of Puritan textuality evident in seventeenth-century depictions of ministerial work, and, as I argue, Spurgeon's portrayal of her own work, is further examined in chapter three, "Spurgeon's Representation of Her Position and Ministry."

does not distribute copies of the Bible in her Book Fund, in a few occasions in her devotional texts Spurgeon refers to particular aspects or verses of Scripture. In many of these references she represents the Word as a powerful agent through images that parallel the Puritans' depiction of Scripture. Like Brooks, Watson, and Gill she portrays the Bible specifically as light, "a bright star amidst the darkness…a lamp unto my feet," and as necessary sustenance, "a honeycomb of delight and sweetness" that "my soul may eat" (*Basket of Fruit* 84, *Camphire* 21). By relying on the language of Puritan representations of Scripture Spurgeon, like her husband, reminds her readers that Word-centred Reformed theology is especially helpful for the study of Scripture. While many Dissenters are embracing contemporary liberal theology and questioning the supremacy and authority of the Bible, Spurgeon emphasizes the vital sustenance provided Scripture and the necessity of Puritan books that are rooted in this biblical power.

e. "Excursions from an Arm-Chair": Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Textuality

In addition to Puritan textuality Spurgeon, in her representation of the agency of her Book Fund texts, also draws on features of textuality that emerged in the eighteenth century. Here the performative features of the text are applied to the Bible and religious tracts in the form of the it-narrative or specifically, the book object-narrative. In the it-narrative, an "odd sub-genre of the novel," inanimate objects such as coins, pieces of clothing, household objects, and even animals "serve as the central characters" of the texts (Blackwell 10). Though there are varied theories regarding the inspiration of this genre, most of the stories trace an object and provide a, somewhat satirical, moral lesson, typically "the over-valuation of worldly goods" (Festa "Moral Ends" 310).[75] Many of the narratives appear as "a symbol of the vanity of worldly

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[75] Scholars of eighteenth-century textuality have suggested that the object-narrative represents the eighteenth-century "genuine fascination with material culture" and writers "seized on the speaking object as a way to reflect the mobility and power of commodities" in the rising eighteenth-century marketplace (Lupton 404). The genre may

things" and they "incite the reader to reflect on his or her mortality, the transience of the material world" (Festa "Moral Ends" 312-13). The it-narrative was initially popular in the eighteenth century and many tales were printed in over twenty editions.[76] However, it was "a mid-century vogue" and by the end of the century tales of "prosing pocket watches and soliloquizing snuffboxes" were declining in popularity and the subject of the object-narrative shifted. Stories of coins and animals "were now replaced by talking books" and particularly religious texts (Price 108).

Numerous tales emerged in the early and mid-nineteenth century with Bibles as the central speaking character, or with a focus on characters' use of religious texts. The titles of book object-narratives, many of which were commissioned by religious publishers, include *The History of a Religious Tract Supposed to Be Related by Itself* (1806), *The History of an Old Pocket Bible* (1812), *The History of a Pocket Prayer Book, Written by Itself* (1839), *The Story of a Red Velvet Bible* (1862), and *Handed-On: Or, the Story of a Hymn Book* (1893). Many of these narratives focus on a moral lesson; however, the instruction was less a satirical comment on societal worldliness, as in the eighteenth-century it-narrative. Rather, the teaching was educational and or spiritual, directed at both children and adults. Though typically fictional, the religious book object-narrative also corresponds to non-fictional representations of the agency of religious texts.

I suggest the personification evident in the book object-narrative is another lens through which to examine the language of agency evident in Spurgeon's reports and in the Religious

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also have developed as a response to the burgeoning print market with authors "reproduc[ing] what it feels like to have their agency transferred to a marketable object over which they have lost control" (Lupton 411). Others have suggested the narrative reflects a renewed focus on the spiritual meaning of objects (Benedict 20).

[76] As one late eighteenth-century critic lamented "every thing has had its adventures, from a Bank Note to a Shilling…from a Star to a Gold-headed Cane" (quoted in Festa "Lives" 134).

Tract Society reports. As Leah Price notes, religious book societies, such as the RTS, had "a ready-made vocabulary in the it-narrative" (134). In the RTS missionary reports writers drew on this established language of personification to represent books and tracts as an extension of missionary work. As noted earlier in the chapter, RTS texts were represented as "silent messengers" that could walk, talk, and even travel to places missionaries could not enter (Price 133). For evangelical publishers and authors, the language of the object-narrative allowed them to animate books as "preachers" and to imply that the force driving these books around the world was not human, but divine. In this context religious texts were represented as "providentially propelled books" (Price 134). As I've argued, this anthropomorphized imagery and language is similarly evident in Spurgeon's Fund reports. She represents her distributed texts as not only imparting knowledge, but also as speaking and preaching. The books Spurgeon "send[s] forth" have "God-given power and unction [and] tell of a Savior's love and grace" (*TYA* 23). She also draws on similar, even identical, language as the RTS in her representation of the books as animated travellers and preachers. Spurgeon describes the books as "silent messengers," "precious messengers," and "little ambassadors of peace," that speak in "heathen lands" (*TYA* 79, *TY* 301, *TY* 302, *TY* 302).

It is not unexpected that Spurgeon draws on the idea of the text as "preacher" and borrows familiar language from the tract societies who also send out books with the expectation that they will perform upon readers. However, Spurgeon's portrayal of the agency of her distributed texts is more complex and developed than that of the RTS. In her attempt to represent the heterogeneous agency and necessity of the Puritan text she not only draws on the language of the religious it-narrative, but she also *creates* her own book object-narrative. Spurgeon relies on the conventions of the book object-narrative to dramatize Dissenting

ministerial suffering - both spiritual and material- and to, significantly, position her Puritan books as the antidote that will cure and relieve the minister's plight.

Spurgeon's yearly Fund reports have a similar structure: a brief introduction, monthly updates with numerous extracts from letters by ministers who have received texts, devotional segments, discussions of ministerial poverty, and updates regarding the distribution of sermons and texts to missionaries. All of the reports conclude with a "summary of work" outlining how many texts were distributed and to which denominations. Though there is some variation, most of the reports follow this structure. The report from 1885, however, includes a notable deviation. In the middle of this report, between the monthly updates of May and June, Spurgeon inserts a section titled "Excursions from an Arm-chair" (*TY* 378). Here she invites readers to embark on "a few mental journeys" following "[book] parcels to their destination[s]" (*TY* 378). This thirteen page section blends fiction with quotes from ministers' letters and imagines a pilgrimage tracing the books from the Fund to eight destinations: the Coast of France, a town on the English shores, a village in Kent, Cambridgeshire, Ireland, the midland counties England, an English manufacturing town, and an island off Scottish coast. Many of the details of the books' journeys are fictional, "as we travel by imagination only," however, the destinations are real locations Spurgeon has distributed texts (*TY* 379).

Though it may not be obvious as to why Spurgeon chose to include a book object-narrative in this specific report, the date provides some context. As noted above, CH. Spurgeon wrote and published articles in his periodical throughout the 1880s warning of the rise of liberal theology within his Baptist tradition and Dissent as a whole. However, it was not until the mid to late 1880s, when Dissenting theologians and ministers began to adopt and embrace modern science and approaches to Scriptures, that he initiated his direct attack on his own denomination.

Spurgeon's 1885 report emerges within this context at the early stages of the Down-Grade Controversy. I suggest this context directly corresponds to her use of the book object-narrative. Traditionally, the object-narrative reflected a fascination with material culture and stories dramatized the overvaluation of goods to encourage readers to evaluate their focus on the material. Given the popularity of the genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Spurgeon's readers would likely be familiar with a story tracing the voyage of an object. However, Spurgeon relies upon this fictional genre to, in fact, *encourage* a fascination with and interest in the texts she distributes. More specifically, the object-narrative allows Spurgeon to illustrate, with fictional embellishment, the minister's suffering. The hardship is both spiritual, they are struggling to fight liberal theological "adversaries," and material, they suffer from isolation and minimal compensation. In turn, she represents Puritan texts as the immediate and necessary remedy that will help ministers fight the spiritual battle and provide them with preaching aids they cannot afford to procure.

Here, Spurgeon again represents her position as extending beyond mere support of her husband. She is not merely distributing CH. Spurgeon's books and "helping" his ministry. Rather, by portraying her distributed texts as responding to an urgent ministerial need she further validates her position as a necessary ""supplier" of texts (*TYA* 28). She not only provides textual food, but also distributes "necessities" to God's army; textual weapons for war and aid for suffering. Throughout her it-narrative the texts not only "speak" to ministers but also provide "comfort and cheer" to physical suffering, "good food" for spiritual hunger, and "reinforcements" against spiritual battle (*TY* 383, 380, 385). By imagining a fictional journey into ministerial homes Spurgeon takes creative license and magnifies the minister's spiritual need, his response to the text, or as Spurgeon suggests, the "appreciative reception" (*TY* 387),

and what the text provides. Therefore, she draws on an established fictional genre, one that already assigns action to an object, in order to dramatize the indispensability and agency of the Puritan text, and in turn, her own independent ministry.

In the book object-narrative the text is at the centre of the story and the tale is typically focused on the book's travels to assorted locations and owners. There is significant variation in the structure of book object-narratives. A single story may incorporate a variety of elements, one of which is a "travelogue" or "imaginary voyage" (Flint 173). Though the books in Spurgeon's tale are not object-narrators describing their own journeys, as is often the case in these narratives, it is nevertheless an imaginary object-narrative with the travel of the book at the centre of the story. At the beginning of Spurgeon's narrative she invites readers to join her on a few "mental journeys" (*TY* 378) following the Book Fund texts. She describes how the adventure will unfold: "As we travel in imagination only…we shall flit across the seas and back again…we shall, Asmodeus-like, take a peep into many homes and hearts" (*TY* 379). It is significant that Spurgeon begins by defining her journey through the metaphor of "Asmodeus-like." Asmodeus refers to "an evil spirit known from a variety of Jewish sources" ("Asmodeus"). This figure emerges throughout literature of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as a demonic character and trope relating to omniscience. In the seventeenth-century French novel *The Devil Upon 2 Sticks* (1707) Asmodeus is a lame devil or demon "who rewards his saviour with a revelatory flight over Madrid" (Hollington). The figure later appears in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, specifically in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848) as "a satirical figure who could lift off rooftops to expose the vices within" (Agathocleous 82). In the beginning of chapter 47 the narrator of *Dombey and Son* calls for a "spirit who would take the house-tops off…and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes" (253). By the mid to

late nineteenth century Asmodeus became a general trope for omniscience, an "Asmodean quality of seeming omniscience," and particularly for diagnosing societal ills (Agathocleous 82).

In light of Spurgeon's imaginary voyage into "homes and hearts," her reference to Asmodeus and the idea of omniscience is not out of place. Although, when the wider context is considered, namely the Book Fund reports of a Puritan writer, it is somewhat peculiar that Spurgeon relies on this fictional, demonic trope to explain the journey of her texts. We might expect the journey to be spirit-like or for readers to imagine they, along with the books, are entering the homes of ministers as angels, bringing joy and light. However, the reference to Asmodeus implies a sense of darkness and revealing sin or vice. I suggest that Spurgeon's reference to this trope corresponds to the contemporary theological context of Dissent. Spurgeon draws on this particular figure as a way in which to emphasize and "diagnose" the spiritual ills within Dissent. Namely the treatment of ministers and the theological wavering of Dissenting believers, giving in to the "adversaries" that challenge the Puritan faith. By establishing the journey as one that will, "Asmodeus-like," reveal the darkness, suffering, and even sin, in Dissenting hearts, Spurgeon not only draws attention to the plight of ministers and instability of Dissent, but she also positions her distributed texts as the objects that will relieve the minister's suffering, transform his faith, and in turn, save his congregation. Through his Down-Grade articles CH. Spurgeon "diagnoses" the state of Dissenting and Baptist faith and, here, through her ministry, Spurgeon presents her own creative polemic against liberal theology. In doing so, she also foreshadows her participation in the Down-Grade, a doctrinal battle reserved for male theologians.[77]

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[77] Chapter four examines how Spurgeon represents and participates in the Controversy.

At each destination along her imaginary journey Spurgeon describes a context of hardship. Every minister's home the reader enters is one of physical and spiritual isolation, loneliness, and darkness. In the mid to late nineteenth century many Dissenting ministers received little compensation and struggled to support their families. The lack of financial support "forced some out of the ministry, however reluctantly, because they could just not afford to live" (K. Brown 153).[78] Part of this financial hardship corresponds to the size of the congregations who support the minister's salary. In light of the religious uncertainty of the period "the Nonconformist attendance rate…decline[d]…during the later 1880s and 1890s" and in turn ministers suffered financially (McLeod 172). Spurgeon includes many letters in her reports from Dissenting ministers who confirm their financial and spiritual challenges. However, in her imaginary narrative Spurgeon repeatedly emphasizes, and perhaps sensationalizes, the ministers' suffering. In doing so she reminds her readers of yet another consequence of doubting or denying their faith.

As Spurgeon's imaginary journey begins she is quick to establish an atmosphere of hardship. Readers follow a distributed text to a minister in "the fair land of France" (*TY* 379) who is described as isolated, living in a "far away region," suffering from "loneliness," and "greatly in need of wise and loving help" (379). Likewise, the next recipient, a Wesleyan minister on the coast of France, is "toiling" and suffering from "scant[y] means and a "scanty library" (*TY* 380). The following destination, "a lovely village in Kent," has a particularly dark atmosphere of "sin, and sorrow, and sickness" (*TY* 382). The context of "sorrow" is evident as

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[78] The historical context and financial instability of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministers will be further examined in the following chapter. Although the potential causes vary, Kenneth Brown suggests the instability of Dissenting faith, shifting theology, rising doubt, and decline in church attendance led to a crisis of Dissenting ministers, particularly regarding their financial state and morale. For most Dissenting ministers, aside from Methodists, ministerial financial support was "not centrally determined" and "depended on the size and situation of the individual church as well as the reputation of the particular minister" (155). With church numbers declining and a period of agricultural depression many ministers, city and rural, suffered financially (153).

the narrator describes the local preachers as “poor men…true and brave” suffering from “few comforts” with “a family to bring up….on only 80 per annum” (382). A number of the ministers face both financial and spiritual hardship. In describing the atmosphere of one minister’s home Spurgeon declares it is not only filled with sorrow, but “evil is present here” (382). The narrator explains the context of “sin” and “evil” is due to the “adversaries” and “infidels,” the leaders and theologians that have turned from Dissenting, Puritan, theology. Spurgeon suggests such liberal adversaries “boast of their science” and try to lead the minister astray (*TY* 380). She proclaims that the ministers need to be “armed,” with Puritan books, in order to “repel” these “cruel and cunning adversaries” (380). Another stop later in the journey, the “midland counties of England,” is described in similar terms. Spurgeon emphasizes both the minister’s suffering, “he is…very lonely and isolated,” and the theological challenges, he is facing a “warfare against evil” (*TY* 385). By drawing on object-narrative omniscience Spurgeon represents the “homes and hearts” of ministers, and by implication Dissent faith, as filled with toil, hardship, and battle against sin. Following her dramatization of the minister’s condition she strategically represents the distributed Puritan texts as both armour against theological liberalism and an antidote to the minister’s suffering.

Once the first book reaches the minister’s hands the narrator proclaims it is a “companion[] who can cheer his loneliness, and comfort his heart” (*TY* 381). When the next text enters a minister’s home it is described as a “choice companion” and an “unfailing source[] of cheer and comfort!” (*TY* 385). For another minister the books are “a company of new friends” (*TY* 387). Spurgeon represents the Fund books as directly alleviating the minister’s loneliness and sorrow with companionship and comfort. Significantly, the distributed Puritan texts are described by the narrator at the first destination as “good helpful books” (*TY* 380). Their value

rest not only in the their immediate alleviation of the minister's isolation, but also their performance as a shield: "good helpful books [are] of immense importance…for the man of God needs to be armed at all points to repel these cruel and cunning adversaries" (380). In the first few paragraphs of the imaginary journey the Puritan texts are not simply helpful preaching aids for the minister. They are also represented as objects of utmost "importance" because of the companionship and defense they provide. At a later destination the texts are again represented as "reinforcements" against "warfare," further emphasizing the necessity and agency of the books for protecting the spiritual life of the minister (*TY* 385).

As an imaginary bystander who follows the books, the reader also "witnesses" the textual performance first-hand. When a minister receives the book "we listen to him" and "see" his demeanour change. We observe how he is "lifting up his eyes…and blessing God" for this "companion[] who can cheer…and comfort his heart" and prepare him for battle (*TY* 379). The pattern of suffering followed by the alleviation of the text continues throughout the fictional pilgrimage and the book's abilities continue to multiply. Another minister suffers from immense poverty and few books, thus, the "parcel of books" arrives and, in the language of nourishment, they "replenish" his "scanty library" (*TY* 380). Spurgeon also suggests the recipients themselves perceive the books as sustenance. One of the ministers proclaims: a "parcel of books was food, and company…for me for more than twelve months!" (*TY* 390). Through the object-narrative the agency of the text is represented through language of sustenance and provision, alleviating the minister's "hunger" with spiritual food.

Significantly, the work of the text, and by implication Spurgeon's own ministry, also influences the growth and stability of Dissenting faith. After one minister received the books he announces that his "congregations have been trebled" (*TY* 381). Likewise, when a minister on

the "English shores" receives books from the Fund the narrator suggests the texts will "bring forth precious fruit in his ministry" (381). Here Spurgeon not only represents the texts as armour against "infidels," but as inspired agents of reproduction; multiplying and bringing forth new believers. Through the minister's preaching the books strengthen the Dissenting church; a church that is no longer sorrowful and sick, but fruitful. By implication, Spurgeon is not only providing textual aid, but through her Puritan books she is performing the work of evangelism, such work she, as ministerial wife, is qualified and capable of.

Spurgeon's imaginary book adventure attests to her reliance on established genres of textual agency in her representation of the Puritan text. Though the object-narrative was popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the genre was relatively ignored until the 1990s. Scholars have more recently begun to examine the object-narrative in terms of broader literary and social issues in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England; however, the object-narrative is still considered a "neglected literary form" (Blackwell "Intro" 12). The specific study of book-object and religious object-narratives is further limited with only a selection of scholars, Lynn Festa, Elaine Freedgood, and Leah Price, examining the genre.[79] Therefore, Spurgeon's object-narrative and the above analysis provide further material for the renewed study of this sub-genre. Spurgeon's narrative also suggests that in her representation of texts she is willing to borrow a variety of images and tropes that shaped the history of Dissenting textual agency. However, as argued throughout this chapter, all of the adopted illustrations, phrases, and metaphors, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, are strategically shaped by Spurgeon to emphasize the agency, performance, and necessity of Puritan books.

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[79] Lynn Festa "The Moral Ends of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Object Narratives," Elaine Freedgood "What Objects Know: Circulation, Omniscience And The Comedy Of Dispossession In Victorian It-Narratives," and Leah Price *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain.*

VI. "Books at the Bottom of a River": Chapter Conclusion

In her report for 1894, near the end of her two volumes of Book reports, Spurgeon includes two letters from missionaries in China who received books from her Fund. Throughout her reports Spurgeon records hundreds of letters from missionaries and ministers who have received books and written to thank her. These two particular letters, however, are set apart in the report within a section titled "Books at the Bottom of a River" (*TYA* 306). Here, she transcribes the two letters from the missionaries and provides an introduction and brief commentary. The letters describe the "journeyings" of "the large parcel of books" from the Fund to missionaries in China (306). The missionaries explain that they are in a secluded Province and any package sent to them must travel by steamer, small boat, mules' backs, camels, and through rivers and hills before it reaches the missionary station. The missionaries recently received notice that a box arrived for them and they knew from a letter Spurgeon sent that books were on the way. However, "owing to some accident to the boat" the box containing the books "had gone down to the bottom of the river!" (306-7). When the missionaries arrived to pick up the package, which included the box of books along with other supplies, it was severely damaged and they expected the books to be destroyed. When they opened the box they found the parcel of books, miraculously, "in a part of the box where not one drop of water had penetrated!" (307). Despite sinking to the bottom of the river the books were "clean and bright…all in perfect condition!" (307). Spurgeon's inclusion of this account re-iterates the seemingly miraculous power and agency that she attributes to the Puritan texts distributed by the Fund; however, it is her commentary upon the letters that is significant.

Spurgeon typically prefaces transcriptions of letters with a description of the minister's or missionary's circumstances, the struggles they face, and how thankful she is to be able to send

them "help" in the form of books. I have suggested that by continuously emphasizing the minister's poverty and the Book Fund texts as a response to this need, Spurgeon dramatizes the indispensability and performance of the Fund books. In this particular account, however, Spurgeon herself directly states her intention to emphasize the necessity and agency of the books she distributes. Rather than introducing the letters with a reminder of the missionaries' hardship she explains precisely why she has included these letters: "It will please my dear friends to read it" for this "most interesting account," both the letters are her commentary, "prov[es] how great a boon a gift of books is" (*TYA* 306). For, she writes, the account shows" the perils through which a present from the Book Fund pass[es]" and emphasizes the receivers' "grateful acknowledgement" of the books (306). Throughout the previous reports Spurgeon has emphasized the various divine provisions of the Puritan texts that "feed," direct, and encourage. Here, by declaring the books to be a "great boon," she reiterates the blessings and aid the texts provide. Significantly, the benefits of the texts, described and illustrated in twenty years of reports, are not simply suggested, but are now "proven."

This miraculous account is represented as the ultimate declaration of the agency of the Puritan text. Because the books perform as God's "messengers" they carry immense benefit, but they also receive divine protection to ensure they "overcome" any peril and reach their destination. Spurgeon suggests that the book, and her work in the Fund, is of such value that God applies a particular "watchfulness" over it, confirmed by the arrival of the books in "perfect condition" (*TYA* 308). Finally, she reiterates the immense need for Puritan texts by highlighting the missionaries' "grateful acknowledgment" of the books. She also notes the missionaries' comments on the value of the books they received: "How he has blessed us through these gifts," books that are "stimulating and refreshing to our hearts" (*TYA* 306, 308). After shaping the

account into a testimony of the necessity and agency of the Puritan text Spurgeon concludes by linking her texts, and by implication her work as a "supplier" and distributor of divine aid, to God's provision. She declares that God ensures the "safety" of the "precious [books]" and through these Puritan agents he "spares no pains…to secure benefits and blessings to the beloved" (307).

Chapter Three:
"A famine" among the "the under-shepherds": Spurgeon's Puritan Library and Language of Sustenance

Every idle shepherd [should] tremble…what monsters are they that feed and feast other men's souls, with the dainties and delicates of heaven, but starve their own? ~ Thomas Brooks, 1655

How sad is it when the *Shepherds* need to be fed? ~ Thomas Watson, 1666

I want books full of the marrow and fatness of the gospel, spread forth as a glorious feast for the satiating of their own souls…that God's ministers may draw therefrom abundant supplies for their work of feeding the flock of God ~ Spurgeon, 1884

In Spurgeon's Book Fund reports she describes the work of the Fund as "filling the hungry with good things," "reliev[ing]…the pressure of the famine," "dispens[ing] bread to the hungry," distributing "manna," "spread[ing] forth…a glorious feast," and "supplying…'strong meat'" (*TY* 13, 48, 178, 312, 314, *TYA* 28). Without context the Fund seems to operate as a charity, literally feeding the hungry. This is a testament to Spurgeon's representation of her textual work through extensive, and somewhat peculiar, metaphors and images of sustenance. As suggested in the previous chapter, Spurgeon portrays the texts she distributes in her Fund through a variety of metaphors that allow her to represent Puritan books, and Puritan theology, as necessary to Dissenting faith. These books perform as "divine instruction," "weapons of war," and "silent messengers of salvation" (*TY* 221, 171, *TYA* 70). However, in the reports the overarching imagery that defines the Puritan text, the entire operation of the Book Fund, and Spurgeon's self-representation, is that of sustenance.

Early in the work of the Fund Spurgeon establishes a context of hunger and language of nourishment. In her second report she declares that her distribution of Puritan books is a

response to “poor Pastors” who are “famishing for lack of mental food” (*TY* 14). Though some Dissenting ministers were, in fact, literally starving and receiving little compensation for their work, she dramatizes the minister’s lack of resources as “a serious book-famine” (*TY* 234).[80] Through this dire metaphor Spurgeon suggest ministers are suffering not only from minimal income or resources, but from textual and theological starvation. With their low wages many ministers could not afford books to help them prepare their sermons and “feed” the congregation. However, their “eager hunger” cannot be satisfied by just any religious texts (*TY* 114). In light of the late nineteenth-century challenges to Dissenting theology Spurgeon notes some ministers have turned from Reformed Puritan beliefs toward liberal theology.[81] She, therefore, suggests their “soul[s] [are] well-nigh famished upon “strange doctrine’” (*TY* 346). They are starving for “the refreshments of *good* books,” those of “solid, old-fashioned, Scriptural, Puritanic theology” (*TYA* 69, 28; italics added). Thus, in her mission statement Spurgeon announces that when “no Puritans can be [found] “the Book Fund seeks to…plac[e] as a free gift in the hands of poor pastors that nourishment for their brains” in order to “relieve somewhat the pressure of the famine” (*TY* 46, 48). The metaphors and imagery of sustenance multiply throughout her two volumes of reports. In response to the minister’s suffering the Puritan texts perform as “a feast” for preachers who are “hopelessly consumed” by “book hunger” (*TYA* 43, *TY* 209). Likewise, the Fund’s distribution of books “suppl[ies] the nourishment” to “feed hungry minds” (*TY* 115, *TYA* 14).

The extensive imagery and language of sustenance evident in Spurgeon’s reports inspire a number of questions that shape the focus of this chapter: Why does Spurgeon represent her

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[80] The late nineteenth-century ministerial financial context is examined later in this chapter.
[81] Many nineteenth-century Dissenting traditions, particularly Baptist, embraced Reformed theology of the Puritan era. The Puritans “were theologians of the Reformed tradition,” emphasizing the sovereignty of God, sanctification and living holy, and the primacy of Scripture over church tradition” (Wallace 206).

Fund, the distributed Puritan texts, and the minister's position and hardship through metaphors of famine and nourishment? Is she drawing on established representations of ministerial work? How does this language of hunger garner support for her Fund and how does it correspond to Spurgeon's larger mission of a Dissenting return to Puritan Reformed Theology? How does the language of sustenance shape Spurgeon's representation of her work and, in turn, her position as ministerial wife?

I. "Books full of the marrow…of the gospel": Chapter Argument

Spurgeon's motif of textual hunger establishes an atmosphere of urgency: "the book-famine was even more dire and grievous than we anticipated" (*TYA* 77). This urgency corresponds not only to the Dissenting minister's poverty and lack of books, but to the rapid spread of theological doctrine, within Dissent and specifically the Baptist tradition, that challenged Reformed Puritan theology. As noted above, Spurgeon emphasizes that the Dissenting minister needs "good" Puritan books to ensure he remains firm in his theology and continues to preach "Scriptural Puritan" sermons to congregations that are wavering and doubting their Calvinist faith. Spurgeon boldly announces her rejection, even personal distaste, of two "giant evils" that challenge Reformed theology (*TY* 175). Namely, "new theology," which she clarifies is "a modern device of Satan," and "old lies" (*TYA* 250, 251, 28). The "new" doctrines reference the liberalization of Reformed theology and the alteration of Calvinistic principles, such as the creation account and eternal punishment, in response to emerging doctrines of evolution. The "old" theological positions that challenged fundamental doctrines of Reformed faith, such as predestination and the Trinity, include such movements as Antinomianism, Arminianism, and Sabellianism. All of which emerged before and during the Puritan era and continued to challenge Reformed theology into the nineteenth-century. Spurgeon

relies on a rhetoric of sustenance in order to portray her work as a necessary and direct response to these "strange doctrine[s]" (*TY* 347). In doing so she positions herself and her Fund as firmly opposing theological "evil influences" (*TYA* 120). She is not merely supporting her husband's theology, but, as I argue here and in chapter four, she relies on her own theological training and knowledge to both defend Reformed Puritan doctrine and take action, through her distribution of Puritan texts, against the spread of opposing theologies. Further confirming that Spurgeon's representation of her work extends beyond mere charitable reporting and re-imagines the position of the "help-meet" as one of both theological defense and reform.

Through language entrenched in biblical and Puritan imagery of nutriment Spurgeon represents her Fund, the Puritan texts she distributes, and her own ministerial work, as disseminating the critical "nourishing" truth of Reformed theology in order to "counteract[…]" "rampant errors" of theological heresy (*TYA* 254). More specifically, I propose a two part argument regarding the context and significance of Spurgeon's framework of sustenance. First, by relying on imagery that echoes scriptural rhetoric of nourishment Spurgeon suggests her Fund not only distributes books, but also provides "heavenly manna," similar to the "spiritual food" of the Bible (*TY* 204, 293). Through scriptural imagery familiar to her Dissenting readers Spurgeon links Puritan texts to the authority and provision of the Bible. She declares the Puritan texts she distributes are "filled with the 'marrow and fatness of the gospel'" (*TY* 314). Therefore, they provide the minister with especially "strong meat'" to "strengthen him to contend valiantly against these "new gods" that give no sustenance (*TYA* 28).

Second, Spurgeon extends the language of sustenance to her representation of the minister's position. She portrays his responsibility and hardship specifically through the Puritan motif of the "hungry shepherd" who is "in need of mental food" for himself and his congregation

(*TY* 48). In seventeenth-century Puritan literature the work of ministerial shepherds is directly tied to "the preachers' task [of] feed[ing] their congregations" (Packer 204). This feeding is represented as preaching the "nourishing power of the biblical message" and leading the flock to truth, away from error (Packer 204-5). Puritan writers insist the minister must first feed himself: "Preach to yourselves first, before you preach to the people" (Baxter quoted in Beeke and Jones 1702). By ensuring he has fed upon and studied Scripture, he can then extend the provision to his people. In light of the extensive theological controversies and challenges to Reformed theology in the seventeenth-century Puritan writers emphasize that the minister must rely upon and "eat" *only* scriptural food in order to ensure that he and his flock are not led astray by heresy. Thomas Brooks (1608-80) preaches that the minister ought to "let the Word be…digested" ("Unsearchable Riches" 221) for then he is able to "feed the Flock of God." Thomas Watson (1620-86) emphasizes biblical preaching helps the congregation "fight against…errors which carry damnation" (*Beatitudes* 9). By specifically representing ministers in her reports as "true shepherds" Spurgeon not only emphasizes the necessity of providing books to ministers, but she also echoes the Puritan defence of Reformed theology. More specifically, she borrows ministerial imagery from Puritan writers she and CH. Spurgeon studied and admired.
The texts of these Puritan divines provide insight into Spurgeon's personal library and, significantly, the imagery that shapes her representation of Puritan texts, pastoral work, and her own ministry. Furthermore, her recorded account of her Puritan study not only confirms her knowledge of Puritan texts, but also contributes to her portrayal of the "training" required for ministerial partners.

Finally, I consider Spurgeon's self-representation as a "nursing-mother" (*TY* 378). Referring not to her maternal care of her own children or even the children of her congregation,

but to the theological feeding of men. In her portrayal of her work Spurgeon draws on the Puritan motif of the minister as mother, feeding his congregation from the "breasts" of Scripture. Puritan ministers often, unabashedly, compare themselves and their work to nursing mothers. Even "call[ing] themselves breasts of God" for "the Bible was God's milk; the minister was the breast at which the congregation suckled" (Leverenz 1). The Puritans proclaim to their congregations that "Ministers are your Mothers too" for "their Lips [are] the Breasts thro' which sincere Milk of the Word has pass'd unto you, for your Nourishment" (Cotton Mather quoted in Leverenz 1). Spurgeon, likewise, declares she is a "nursing-mother" of ministerial "promising children," directly feeding and providing for God's shepherds (*TY* 378). This is a significant claim of authority; a preacher's wife embodying a role, somewhat ironically, reserved for male ministers. Spurgeon does not claim to be a preacher; however, by drawing on ministerial language she suggests her work, feeding ministers Puritan scriptural texts, echoes the *necessity* of pastoral work and, as such, is essential to the stability and defence of Reformed theology. Spurgeon's language of sustenance, therefore, is not simply a quaint framework for her reports. By drawing on biblical and Puritan imagery of nourishment Spurgeon dramatizes the Puritan text, actively opposes theological heresy, and re-frames the maternal role of the minister's wife.

II. "Heavenly manna": The Sustenance of Puritan Texts

When Spurgeon outlines the work of her Fund and reports on the distribution of books to ministers and missionaries she consistently relies on metaphors and imagery of nourishment. The books are rarely just "sent out." Rather, "a glorious feast" is "spread forth" and "savoury food" is "digested" (*TY* 314, 242). The texts, however, are not generic sustenance and often appear specifically as "bread" and "manna" (*TY* 312). Spurgeon writes that when a minister receives "a small grant of books" from her his "heart…and his soul [are] fed with heavenly

manna" (*TY* 204). When her Dissenting readers learn the books are distributed as "manna" the texts, and their possible power and benefits, are immediately associated with the Scriptures and God's provision. "Manna" has etymological and historical roots in the Bible and is also tied to a significant biblical symbol. Spurgeon's reliance upon the term signals that the Puritan books she sends not only carry biblical truth, but they also provide spiritual sustenance associated with God's provision of Israel and divine promises that echo throughout the Bible.

"Manna" is defined as both the "substance miraculously provided each day as food for the Israelites in the wilderness after their departure from Egypt" and as "God-given nourishment" ("Manna" 1a, 2a). According to the biblical reference, Exodus 16, when Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness they questioned God's direction and provision. Moses provides reassurance with a promise given to him by God: "I will rain bread from heaven for you" (*King James Bible,* Ex.16:4). Following the announcement of provision, bread appeared "on the face of the wilderness…and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (15, 31). The text suggests the bread miraculously appeared and provided continuous sustenance; "Israel did eat manna forty years" (35). Significantly, Moses instructed that the bread would be not only immediate food, but also representative of when God "fed you in the wilderness" and when He "brought you forth from the land of Egypt" (32). Here, the bread transforms into a symbol of constant and future divine provision and deliverance. The wilderness provision and symbolic bread is referenced throughout the Old and New Testaments. The metaphor is also extended, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Deut. 8:3, Luke 4:3). The bread typified God's provision, but also His Word, the biblical text itself. The Scriptures, as "the revelation of God's will," became symbolic of "food of the soul" (Henry" Deuteronomy 8:1-9."). In the Gospel accounts "Manna" was even synonymous with God Himself: "Jesus said unto

them, I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Thus, by representing her distributed Puritan books as "heavenly bread" Spurgeon implies the texts are not simply books about the Bible, but they provide the minister sustenance similar to the miraculous food of the Word (*TY* 204).

Spurgeon ensures the biblical association is undeniable. The books of the Fund carry the sustenance of "manna" and she declares they even "taste" identical to the Word: "as of wafers made with honey" (*TY* 312). By directly referencing Exodus 16:31 Spurgeon leaves no room for misinterpretation; the Puritan books of the Fund rely on Scripture, promote Scripture, and provide the same sweet scriptural sustenance. Peculiarly, Spurgeon also suggests the books of the Fund are distributed similar to the "miraculous" manna. In Exodus the bread "rain[s] from heaven…upon the face of the wilderness" (16:4, 15). Likewise, in reference to "sending out [book] parcels" to missionaries and ministers Spurgeon declares "it is a great delight to drop such manna round about the tents in the wilderness" (*TY* 312). It is a bold comparison; her work echoes God's provision of Israel. She is quick to add that the manna she distributes will only carry divine sustenance when "God's own blessing" underlies the heavenly "bread" (*TY* 70). However, her reliance on the biblical reference suggests that like the pastor's ministry, her own work, as ministerial partner, is also an extension of God's work. Furthermore, by directly linking the Puritan books to the dissemination of scriptural nourishment Spurgeon is not only "feeding" ministers, but she is reiterating her Fund's mission: "counteracting evil" through the "heavenly manna" of "Scriptural, Puritanic theology alone" (*TYA* 28).

In her representation of the "nourishing" Puritan text Spurgeon also relies on scriptural metaphors of the Bible itself; implying, somewhat extraordinarily, that her books carry divine sustenance. In the Bible the Scriptures are consistently described through images of nutriment, such as "milk" and "honey," that provide "nourishment" and feed the spiritual life of the believer

(1 Peter 2:2, Ps. 119:103, 1 Tim. 4:6). Several biblical prophets also "eat" the text and describe the Word as fulfilling and "sweet" (Jer. 15:16, Ez. 3:1-3). Spurgeon labels the Puritan texts she distributes as "Scriptural," but she also represents the texts as embodying or carrying the sustenance of the Word (*TYA* 28). Directly echoing the words of the Bible Spurgeon declares Puritan books, "the best and choicest theological works," are filled with "honey" and "nourishment" that provide "new life" (*TY* 314, 46). She suggests the texts are filled with the same sweet nourishment as the Bible and, thus, they carry a similar redeeming power. According to the Bible, the sustenance provided by the Scriptures has the power to transform and save both the minister and those to whom he preaches. 1 Timothy states that a "good minister of Jesus Christ" is one who is "nourished up in the words of faith" for then he "shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (6, 16). The nourishment of the Word ensures the salvation of the minister and his people. By distributing "bread to the hungry" ministers Spurgeon suggests the ministers are fed and through their preaching "the saints are fed" and "sinners are ransomed from everlasting death" (*TY* 178). Like the Scriptures, the sustenance and saving power of the Puritan text extends from the minister to the people. By drawing on metaphors and images of biblical sustenance Spurgeon represents her distributed texts as embodying divine provision, nutrients, and salvation. I further suggest that Spurgeon's biblically-infused language of nourishment has broader historical and theological significance.

First, by drawing on scriptural representations of sustenance Spurgeon borrows imagery familiar to her Dissenting readers. Historically, Dissenting faith is defined by an unwavering commitment to the Bible, both in language and theology. Spurgeon's scriptural metaphors of nourishment link the Puritan text to the authority of the Word. Second, considering the historical and theological context of the reports it is significant that Spurgeon represents Puritan texts as

invaluable and directly tied to Scripture. Puritan literature was in high demand throughout the early and mid nineteenth century as Dissenters embraced Puritan Word-centred Reformed theology. However, by the latter half of the century, when Spurgeon established her Book Fund, "the call for 'the good old puritanical writings' was silenced, and the works of the Puritans ceased to issue from the presses of Great Britain and North America" (Beeke and Pederson xiii). As noted in the previous chapter, Spurgeon distributed scripturally-inspired Puritan texts at a time when "the Calvinism of the Puritans was discarded as an outmoded system of Christian thought, and the high view of Scripture that was the very heartbeat of Puritanism was displaced by…much different view[s], proclaimed to be more scholarly or more scientific" (Beeke and Pederson xiii). Such views include both evolutionary theories and new interpretations of the Bible that cast doubt on the historical reliability of the Word and challenge whether Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, was directly inspired by God (McLeod 182). This theological shift suggests that Spurgeon's language of sustenance is not only an attempt to emphasize the necessity of the books she distributes, but it is also polemical, representative of her argument against alternative theologies and for the revival of Puritan, scriptural truth. By portraying Puritan books as embodying the "marrow and fatness of the gospel" Spurgeon, in turn, suggests the nourishment of the Bible is not only still necessary for Dissenters, but is also the only true sustenance that satisfies spiritual cravings (*TY* 314).

Furthermore, Spurgeon's language of sustenance, specifically the "mental food" of the Puritan text, draws not only from the Bible, but also directly from extensive imagery of nourishment evident in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Puritan representations of the Scriptures. Puritan literature is filled with metaphors of sustenance illustrating God's character; "He is bread to feed you" (Brooks *Apples* 229), the Holy Spirit; "the Comfort of the Spirit…is

the Manna in the Golden Pot" (Watson *Body* 106), and the presence of Christ; "think of Christ still as the very substance, marrow…of the whole Scriptures" (Ambrose (1604-1664) 309). The Puritan divines consistently define the Word through various forms of sustenance. John Owen (1616-1683) declares the Bible is "the food of our souls" (*Grace* 247) and the preface to the 1599 Geneva Bible suggests the Scriptures are "the only food and nourishment of our souls" (quoted in Beeke and Jones 1686). The Puritans also rely on specific biblical images in their representation of the Scriptures, particularly milk, bread, and honey. Puritan preachers regularly instruct believers to "drink" spiritual nourishment from the Word: "we are to come like New born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the Word" (Cotton *Practical Commentary* 338). Likewise, Thomas Hooker (1586-1647) suggests "the elect must suck out…milke out" the "promises of the Gospell" (quoted in Leverenz 3). The Scriptures are also to be consumed as bread and honey. Owen suggests the Bible is "bread of the Word" and "daily meat" (*Grace* 314). Thomas Brooks declares the Bible is "bread to strengthen you" and "a honey-comb to feast you" (*Apples* 212). Significantly, Spurgeon's depiction of the Scriptures, evident in her devotional works, also focuses on these specific Puritan images of the Word. She describes the Bible as "heavenly food" that provides "daily manna" and "a honeycomb of delight and sweetness" that "my soul may eat" (*Carillon* 108, *Camphire* 64). Likewise, in her reports the Puritan books she distributes are "heavenly manna" and "made with honey" (*TY* 312). Spurgeon's reliance on Puritan imagery suggests that her representation of the Word, and the Puritan scriptural texts she distributes, is shaped not only by biblical imagery, but also by established Puritan images of the Word's sustenance. By drawing on imagery of nourishment that is both biblical and Puritanic Spurgeon further validates the benefits and necessity of Puritan books; they carry scriptural sustenance.

In order to consider how Spurgeon further draws on Puritan metaphors of nourishment in her portrayal of the pastor's position, as well as her own ministry, it is helpful to examine her record of her own study of Puritan literature. Her account not only confirms her knowledge of Puritan texts and the writers she preferred, but also contributes to her representation of the "training" required for the ministerial partner's position.

III. "I was…introduced to many of the Puritan[s]": Spurgeon's Theological Study

In CH. Spurgeon's *Autobiography* Susannah Spurgeon writes a chapter titled "A Typical Week's Work" (vol. 4). Here she includes commentary from CH. Spurgeon regarding his work preparing texts for publication, writing letters, and meeting with church leaders; however, much of the chapter focuses on his sermon preparation. According to CH. Spurgeon, when writing a sermon he would refer to "what others have to say about" the biblical passage or topic (4.68). While studying his chosen subject he would turn to commentaries and theological works and, of course, the Puritans. He also notes that he relies on his "dear wife for assistance," stating: "she reads to me [from the selected texts] until I get a clear idea of the whole subject" (68). Here it is evident that Spurgeon not only supported her husband's pastoral work, but she actually studied alongside him, determining appropriate passages, and reading commentaries.[82] CH. Spurgeon's record suggests she was not merely an assistant, or "help-meet," but she performed nearly all of the preparatory work as if she was preaching the sermon herself. Spurgeon also records, in her own words, how she studied with her husband. She intentionally includes this record in both CH. Spurgeon's *Autobiography* and her reports. She suggests she provides the account in her Fund reports since the time preparing sermons with her husband was "of such special delight"

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[82] Spurgeon also assisted her husband in his sermon preparation by "suggest[ing] to him a passage from which he could preach" (*Autobiography* 4.65).

(4.68). However, the record also confirms to her readers that she, as ministerial partner, is both theologically qualified and familiar with the Puritan texts that she distributes.

Spurgeon opens her description of her study through submissive language: “I always found, when I went into the study, an easy chair drawn up to the table, by his side, and a heap of books piled one upon the other…and he permit me to read the various Commentaries” (68-70). I argue, however, that her recognition of CH. Spurgeon “permitting” her to read reflects only her submission in marriage, not intellect. In no other occasion in her reports or her work outside the home, does she record her husband approving of her reading or writing. Following this statement of permission there is also no further mention of CH. Spurgeon’s authority. Rather, her account emphasizes the extent of her reading and her own theological knowledge. She first establishes her familiarity with theological work: “I always found…” (4.68). Her description implies a regular occurrence; she was part of his weekly sermon work, studying material with him for “hours” (4.70). She notes there was “a big heap of books” stacked in front of them both. Though CH. Spurgeon would often open a text “where he desired [her] to read” to him, she also read through many books of “the big heap” on her own. She confirms this by recording that it was through this experience, reading with her husband, that she was “introduced to many of the Puritan…divines whom, otherwise, I might not have known” (4.68). Here she emphasizes that she was not merely keeping her husband company, but studying the material herself. She also implies that her familiarity with the Puritans is not something she, or others, even ministers’ wives, would typically have. However, she implies it is work they *ought* to do by emphasizing that “never” was any other experience more “instructive, and spiritually helpful” (4.70).

Nineteenth-century ministerial wives often had access to religious texts through their husband’s library; however, the study of “formal doctrinal argument,” and particularly writing

about such study, “was deemed beyond the capacity of the female mind” (Styler 14). Ministers’ wives were expected to spiritually guide children and young women, though their instruction was considered only “familiar communication,” not formal religious teaching (*Hints* 5). Thus they required only biblical, and not theological or doctrinal, knowledge. Furthermore, their spiritual “advice” was to “subserve” the “more serious and intelligent…truths delivered from the pulpit” (*Hints* 4, 5). Yet Spurgeon declares she not only studied theology and “the meaning of some passage of God’s Word,” but she also gained “wisdom” of God’s “promise[s],” even, “knowledge” of “doctrine” (4.70) She relies upon this knowledge in her Book Fund work, selecting Puritan texts of “sound doctrine,” and in her theological “meditations” in her reports (*TYA* 245). Though she read works of divinity and assisted CH. Spurgeon with sermon preparation, she did not preach or write her own sermons.[83] Aside from the Methodist tradition, nineteenth-century Dissenting women were not permitted to officially hold a pastoral position or preach to the congregation.[84] Spurgeon, however, suggests that the ministerial wife’s authority

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[83] Of the limited accounts of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministers’ wives some suggest they provide their husbands not only emotional, but intellectual support. In his study of early nineteenth-century wives of Church of England clergymen W.M. Jacob notes the work of one particular wife, Albina, married to George Woodward, vicar of East Hendred, who “treated the poor” and supported her husband by reading from “several books of divinity” (quoted in Jacob 158). Her husband writes that through his wife’s reading she was “the best companion…the best of wives,” signalling that her theological knowledge enhanced her role and work as wife, not her religious work outside the home.

[84] Throughout the eighteenth century women of the Methodist and Quaker traditions were permitted to preach; however, by the early nineteenth century the Methodists had “banned the use of women preachers” (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 172). Though some women continued to preach, “the number of female preachers among the Primitive Methodists had declined by the mid-nineteenth century, and…all the leading and visible roles throughout Nonconformity, as of course in the established church, were occupied by men” (Watts *Dissenters Vol. II* 612). Furthermore, “most Baptist and Congregational churches in the seventeenth century had heeded Paul's admonition that ‘women keep silent in the churches’” (Watts *Dissenters Vol. II* 196). Therefore, women were not only unable to preach, but also could not vote or even speak publicly in the Baptist church as “the Pauline ban on women speaking in church was maintained until the late nineteenth century” (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 173). CH. Spurgeon confirms the Baptist church’s opposition to female preachers: “when women of piety mount the pulpit…they are acting in plain defiance of the command of the Holy Spirit, written by the pen of the apostle Paul” (*Feathers for Arrows* 260). For further reading on nineteenth-century Dissenting women preachers see Christine L. Krueger’s *The Reader’s Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse,* U of Chicago Press, 1992.

and agency does not rest in her ability to preach, but rather in her theological knowledge and independent ministry. Though not identical to her husband's, the work of the ministerial wife may also, nevertheless, contribute to the dissemination of the gospel and the faith of women *and* men.

Furthermore, given Spurgeon's extensive reliance on the Puritan tradition, it is notable that Puritan ministers' wives, though restricted by the conventional patriarchal model and religious status of their husbands, embraced some "religious initiative" in the study of Scripture (Hughes 297).[85] The Puritan emphasis upon piety and individual devotion allowed women equal access to the requirements of godliness, such as reading scripture, prayer, religious instruction of children, and fellowship in the godly community (Willen 567). The spirituality of Puritan women was often considered exemplary, in part due to their apparent emotional and nurturing nature and their capacity for divine submission. However, Puritan ministers' wives in particular could be "formidably influential in the moral and religious lives of their households and parishes," not only due to their piety, but because they were "relatively well educated for women" and "avid readers" who rigorously studied the Scriptures (Hughes 297). Therefore, Spurgeon's representation of the minister's wife as a biblically educated, spiritually knowledgeable woman actively involved in her Dissenting community echoes not only the language of Puritan men, but also the religious agency of Puritan women.

By including the record of her study of religious texts, and specifically the Puritans, in her reports Spurgeon represents this work not only as supportive of her husband, but also as

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[85] Seventeenth-century scholars confirm that although "the ideal woman in conduct books and sermons was a snail, confined to her house," the Puritan emphasis upon practical divinity and godliness offered some "opportunities for female agency" and "female piety was more intense and perhaps more effective than men's" (Hughes 295, 96, 98). For further study of women's role within Puritanism see Ann Hughes's chapter "Puritanism and Gender" in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, edited by John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, Cambridge UP, 2008.

necessary work for the minister's wife and testimony to her own theological knowledge. Traditionally, the minister's wife is to prepare herself for her position by strengthening her "personal character," particularly her "self-control, self-denial, and self-examination" (*Hints* 9). However, Spurgeon suggests she prepared for her future work and role as a minister's wife through extensive study - not only of herself, but of the Puritans. The record also confirms her qualifications for her work; having studied the Puritans and participated in sermon preparation she has the experience, even authority, to proclaim the value of Puritan texts for ministerial work. In light of Spurgeon's Reformed theology and study of Puritan literature she, unsurprisingly, declares her Fund will distribute only the "Puritans" for they are "absolutely necessary for…[the minister's] mental vigour" (*TY* 46). However, she does not restrict Puritan texts to the minister's library; Puritan books should be read by "all" (*TYA* 29). Spurgeon suggests anyone who "believes[s] in God's word" must "invest as largely as possible in…[these] old guides and teachers" (*TYA* 29). Here she again ties Puritan works directly to the Scriptures, they go hand in hand, and much like Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress*, they provide an essential "guide" for biblical truth.

Though she proclaims the value and necessity of Puritan texts in nearly every report, Spurgeon rarely mentions the titles of any Puritan books or suggests any particular author. The end of each report includes a number of records, such as how many books were distributed and which Dissenting denominations of ministers received texts, but rarely *what* books they received. It is likely that Spurgeon would rather promote the reading of Puritan texts in general, rather than one or two authors. The lack of titles may also be intended to avoid the suggestion that she is qualified to provide specific recommendations. When discussing the potential causes of Dissenting ministerial poverty or similar controversial topics, such as the doctrinal debates of the

Down-Grade, Spurgeon typically begins with an apology: "I am neither called upon nor competent to argue out so intricate and important a question…I remember that I am a recorder, not a reformer" (*TY* 221). Following her statement of incompetency she, nevertheless, argues a position. Much like a reformer, presenting her evidence with a passionate and bold defence. Though she does not provide such an argument regarding Puritan titles. However, with her emphasis upon, even obsession with, Puritan literature, it is likely that she preferred, or was familiar with, a particular selection of authors. The works of such writers would not only provide insight into her personal library and operation of her Fund, but also, significantly, how she represents godly books and ministers through the Puritan language of nourishment.

Evidence of Spurgeon's preferred texts would also, helpfully, narrow the vast field of sources. As Keeble notes, "religious works comprised at least half the 100,000 or so titles" printed from 1558 to the end of the seventeenth century (309). Of these, "a very significant proportion – and during periods in the seventeenth century a majority – were Puritan" (309).[86] Though the works of only a few standard Puritan writers, such as Richard Baxter, John Owen, and John Bunyan, are continually republished and studied, the Puritan canon includes hundreds of authors and thousands of texts. Examining the Puritan language of nourishment in a selection of texts, rather than a wide variety, and even more specifically, a selection of texts Spurgeon preferred and promoted through distribution, provides a focused analysis and also reveals the

[86] Edmund Calamy (1671-1732), "celebrated as the biographer of Restoration Nonconformity," (Wykes 379) published an account of many of the ministers who "were ejected or silence'd" by the 1662 Act of Uniformity for refusing to conform. His first record of the Dissenting "Ministers, Lectures, Masters and Fellows" was over three hundred pages and expanded to over 1,000 (Wykes 385). A "substantial minority" of those who were "excluded from the Church of England" were Puritan ministers and teachers, "like the prolific divine Richard Baxter" (Coffee and Lim "Intro" 5). Early nineteenth-century biographical accounts of Puritan writers and ministers, such as Benjamin Brook's *Lives of the Puritans*, also include records of hundreds of "Puritan divines" (Brook xii). Authors, who in their extensive writings, "employed their zeal, their labours, and their influence to promote a more pure reformation" (Brook xix). Modern collections of Puritan biographical sketches are equally extensive. Such as Beeke and Pederson's *Meet the Puritans*, a lengthy 896 page volume that includes over 700 Puritan books and 150 Puritan writers (xxiii).

particular images of sustenance that shape Spurgeon's writing. Though Spurgeon does not provide the Puritan titles she is familiar with or distributes, the historical documents surrounding her work, and outlined below, testify to her Puritan knowledge and sources.

First, CH. Spurgeon's publications, his sermons, texts and records of his prized Puritan collection, provide clear evidence as to the Puritan authors he relied upon in his preaching and teaching. He spoke highly of many Puritan writers and often reminded his congregation of the value of Puritan books: "renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritanic writers" ("Paul- His Cloak and His Books"). He also owned over 380 Puritan texts by approximately 150 different Puritan writers.[87] Of his extensive Puritan collection Susannah Spurgeon observed that "the number and value of Mr. Spurgeon's own copies of the writings of those masters of theology [Puritans] are probably unique for a private library" (4.280). Given his unwavering commitment to Puritan theology one might expect CH. Spurgeon to have a Puritan bookshelf. However, his vast library and dedication to his collection confirms his intense admiration of the Puritans.[88] Among his Puritan volumes I suggest there are particular texts CH. Spurgeon preferred, such as those he re-published in new editions and regularly mentioned in his sermons.

Second, given Spurgeon's support of her husband's preaching and ministry it is likely that she also distributed some of CH. Spurgeon's preferred texts through her Fund. Since she

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[87]According to the index of CH. Spurgeon's Puritan Collection. After his death CH. Spurgeon's personal library was acquired by William Jewell College in Liberty Missouri and in 2006 the collection was sold to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri. The collection, along with various CH. Spurgeon artifacts, including his preaching rail, is now housed in the Seminary's Spurgeon Centre. When CH. Spurgeon's collection was located at William Jewell College's Curry Library the College provided an index of the Puritan writings in his library (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Puritan Writings in the Charles Haddon Spurgeon Collection.").

[88]Even though CH. Spurgeon had the means to buy valuable books, Susannah Spurgeon explains that he "valued literary works for their usefulness" (*Autobiography* 4.296). He "never cared to buy a book simply because it was rare" *unless* "it was one of the Puritans that he needed for his collection" (4.280). In such cases "an order…was at once sent" and "a messenger was dispatched to make sure of getting them" (4.280).

rarely lists titles she distributes, it also significant to note the occasion one is provided as the work must be a volume she deems especially worthy to distribute to ministers. The letters from ministers that are included in the Fund reports also, at times, reference a particular book the minister received. Therefore, if the texts of a Puritan writer are favoured by CH. Spurgeon, as confirmed by his *Autobiography,* published works, and personal library, or the texts are specifically recorded in the Book Fund, it may be argued that Spurgeon was also familiar with these particular works and authors. As noted above, Spurgeon not only distributed the Puritan literature her husband enjoyed, but she also studied and read the texts herself. Further confirming that her language of sustenance is drawn from her *own* study of select Puritan texts.

I suggest three Puritan writers fit the above parameters: Thomas Brooks (1608-1680), Thomas Watson (1620-1686), and John Gill (1697-1771). The texts of these Puritan divines provide insight into Spurgeon's theological study, and, significantly, the imagery that shapes her representation of Puritan texts, pastoral duties, and her own ministry. Prior to examining Spurgeon's reliance upon the distinct language of sustenance evident in the work of these authors, I consider how and why Spurgeon is drawn to each writer, therefore providing further rationale for their selection.

IV. Spurgeon's Puritan Sources: Thomas Brooks, Thomas Watson, and John Gill

There are two aspects that draw the Spurgeons specifically to the works of Brooks, Watson, and Gill. First, the material of these writers is particularly useful for, and even directed to, Dissenting preachers. More specifically, the writers rely on what CH. Spurgeon refers to as "illustrative" sound theology that is helpful for sermon preparation (*Smooth Stones* 5). Early in his ministry CH. Spurgeon was referred to as "John Ploughman," reflective of his ability to preach sermons both theologically intricate and reliant on simple metaphors anyone, even

farmers, could identify with.[89] He therefore relied on and learned from Puritan writers who used relatable illustrations. Spurgeon also likely preferred to distribute titles by these three Puritan writers to poor preachers for similar reasons; their books were exemplary models of simple, yet theological preaching for the minister with few resources.

Second, the works and lives of these Puritans provide a strong defence of Reformed theology evident in accounts of their ministerial persecution and, or their arguments against opposing theologies. The Puritans were in part defined by their "embattled sense of identity" as they fought for further reformation and faced persecution, at times to death (Coffee and Lim "Introduction" 3). As Baptists, a tradition defined by Reformed theology also often opposed, even from other Protestant denominations, the Spurgeons were attracted to the theology of the Puritans, but also to their passionate *defence* of godliness and their reputation as "embattled" Dissenters. Though many Puritan writers faced considerable persecution, the records of the ministries of Brooks, Watson, and Gill suggest their pastoral work was particularly shaped by opposition. Their writings are also characterized by theological persecution and they specifically address doctrinal challenges similar to those the Spurgeons faced in their ministries. These writers, therefore, provide Spurgeon and the minister's she assists, with exemplary models of preaching and defending Puritan doctrine.

In the *Autobiography* Spurgeon describes her study of various Puritan writers and, specifically, her knowledge of the seventeenth-century author, Thomas Brooks. When CH. Spurgeon especially admired a Puritan writer he would often publish a selection of the author's quotes or illustrations that he found useful. His first such collection, *Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Brooks* (1860), consists entirely of excerpts from Brooks's texts. Given that CH.

[89] CH. Spurgeon happily owned the title, "Ploughman is a name I may justly claim," and published a collection of his own teachings, *John Ploughman's Talk*, directed towards "ploughmen and common people" (3).

Spurgeon devoted an entire text to Brooks it is evident that he admired him above other writers. In the introduction to *Smooth Stones* CH. Spurgeon celebrates Brooks as "a great divine…head and shoulders above all people…in mind, and soul, and grace" (iii). Susannah Spurgeon confirms that Brooks was one of her husband's "favourite Puritan writers" (2.19).[90] According to records of CH. Spurgeon's Puritan library he owned the complete works of Thomas Brooks (1866 publication) as well as two seventeenth-century copies of Brooks's *An arke for all God's Noahs in a gloomy stormy day* (1662). Although he owned a vast Puritan collection and often referred to the authors in his sermons, it does not, of course, mean he read them all. However, Susannah Spurgeon assures that "Mr. Spurgeon not only possessed a large number of volumes by Puritan writers, but he was fully conversant with their contents" (4.282). She also claims he read "almost the whole of the volumes issued by the great divines of the Puritan period" (280).[91]

There is also significant evidence that *both* Spurgeons were familiar with, and had read, Brooks's writings. In the *Autobiography* Spurgeon records her own appreciation of Brooks's work. While recalling their early courtship she not only suggests she worked alongside her husband in his sermon preparation, but she also confirms she participated in the compilation of *Smooth Stones.* She notes she "carefully…mark[ed]…paragraphs and sentences" in a variety of Brooks's work (2:19). Spurgeon also, likely, wrote the introduction to *Smooth Stones* alongside

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[90] In the *Autobiography* Spurgeon writes that her husband would often visit a garden and pack "a light lunch" along with "some books, of course, generally including a volume of Brooks, or Manton, or some other Puritan divine" (4.203). When he took holiday trips he was always "well supplied with material for reading" and "took care, in making his selection…to include some biographies, and one or two of his favourite Puritans, such as Manton or Brooks" (4.272).

[91] Regarding CH. Spurgeon's extensive reading Susannah writes: "to give anything like an approximate idea of the extent of Mr. Spurgeon's reading during his thirty-eight years' ministry in London, it would be necessary to make a list of all the principle theological and biographical works published during that period, and add to it a large portion of the other standard literature of the present and previous centuries" (4.279-80).

CH. Spurgeon.[92] Here they confirm their admiration for Brooks as "a very affecting" preacher who relied on relatable, "homely phrases" in his sermons, rather than "exact compositions" (5). As noted above, CH. Spurgeon adopted this simplicity in his sermons.[93] Spurgeon also echoes this approach in her writing; the Fund reports are shaped by the relatable, yet "affecting" language of hunger and sustenance. Additionally, a number of Brooks's works, such as "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ," include specific instructions to young men and "those that preach" (221). Such texts are not only helpful for Spurgeon's poor preachers, but, as I argue in the next section, these works provide further insight into Spurgeon's reliance upon Puritan imagery in her representation of ministerial work.

The Spurgeons also record in their introduction that, like many Puritans, Brooks was a persecuted independent minister. They specifically note his ministry was plagued with severe opposition as he not only "opened [his] meetings more publicly than before," but also faced harassment from his own parish who "petition[ed] against him" (5). Throughout his own ministry CH. Spurgeon also faced extraordinary controversy, from those both within and outside Protestantism. He attempted to defend what he believed were foundational biblical truths against those who sought to "adjust" Dissenting theology and adapt to new scientific and biblical approaches. Significantly, in the Down-Grade Controversy CH. Spurgeon's own Baptist denomination also "petitioned" against him for his strict adherence to Reformed theology. Thus, he could identify with both Brooks's approach to preaching and his steadfast commitment to his

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[92] As noted in chapter one, the Spurgeons' introduction to *Smooth Stones* reveals how she and CH. Spurgeon studied together and ascribe agency to godly texts. In the introduction to *Smooth Stones* the Spurgeons declare to their readers that the book, as a collection of godly Puritan material, is not only a useful text, but one that provides a myriad of benefits to the reader. The text, they suggest, even holds power comparable to the Bible, specifically, the stones David used to conquer Goliath. Therefore, if the reader studies the book with faith, "as David of old" trusted God with the stones, and "adorn[s] thyself" with the text the material will perform as armour against sin and "open up…Scripture" (iii-iv).

[93] CH. Spurgeon's preaching was filled with common metaphors; "he avoided technical terms and always spoke in the language of the working man" (Carter 7).

theology, even when challenged by his fellow brethren. Spurgeon's entire Fund work may also, arguably, be considered a defence of Puritan truth. Like the Puritan preachers, her writing is defined by both a sense of persecution and a passionate attempt at reform.

Seventeenth-century scholars note Brooks was particularly opposed to radical ideas and in his writings he "unmistakably denounced the antinomians" (Liu "Brooks"). Antinomianism reflects one of the many theological controversies within seventeenth-century Puritanism. Though the Puritans embraced similar beliefs, they also had internecine debates on various theological ideas and when "touchstones of orthodoxy, such as justification by faith, the atonement and the Trinity came under fire from those sceptical of conventional orthodoxy" (Wallace 211-12). With the suggestion that Christians were free from Moral Law, the ten commandments, or would naturally obey the law without any external compulsion, many Puritans saw Antinomianism as challenging fundamental articles of Reformed theology (Como 1-3). Socinianism represents the other end of the theological spectrum, suggesting good works and obedience are necessary for justification.[94] In the Down-Grade CH. Spurgeon opposed a number of rising theological approaches within his Baptist tradition, some of which were rooted in the same positions that challenged the Puritan Reformers. In his published articles CH. Spurgeon suggests liberal Dissenters were heading "downward to Socinianism…or something worse," such as the other extreme, Antinomianism ("Documents from the Down-Grade"). In response he declares "Calvinism has in it a conservative force which helps to hold men to the vital truth" and "the present struggle is…the truth of God *versus* the inventions of men" ("Documents" April 1887 Notes).

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[94] Socinians also rejected "the preexistence of Christ, original sin, and the death of Christ as atonement for sin…all central to Reformed orthodoxy" (Wallace 219).

In her reports Spurgeon also boldly addresses the theological controversies and challenges to Reformed, Puritan theology. As noted above, she declares the opposing positions, including Socinianism and emerging liberal theologies, are "old lies dished up as new truths" (*TYA* 28).[95] Here, Spurgeon is not simply supporting her husband, but rather she, herself, as a theologically-trained woman, is speaking against false doctrine. She confirms her opinion of the radical views: "The 'new theology'…I am not afraid to say, I also despise and detest" (*TYA* 245). She "detests" opposition to Puritan theology and declares her work is entirely focused on challenging and defeating such "influences" through "the gift of works of sound and simple Evangelical truth" (*TYA* 120). Therefore, Spurgeon and her husband preferred and admired the work of Brooks for his Reformed theology, but also because his writings provide an ideal model for preaching and confronting familiar theological enemies. Given Spurgeon was well acquainted with Brooks's texts and they were part of her early marriage and theological study, the books also likely shaped her own writing and use of Puritan imagery.

The second Puritan writer admired by both Spurgeons is Thomas Watson (1620-1686). CH. Spurgeon owned a number of Watson's works, including seventeenth-century copies, however, he favoured Watson's *A Body of Practical Divinity*. The text was Watson's "magnum opus" of sermons, a massive work of some 880 quarto pages, on the shorter catechism of the Westminster assembly (Till).[96] As noted above, CH. Spurgeon often re-published and promoted the writings of select Puritan authors whose work he enjoyed. He not only re-published Watson's *Body of Divinity*, but he also wrote an introduction to the book. Here he declares his

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[95] Her participation in the Down-Grade will be further examined in chapter four. I suggest her rebuke of opposing doctrine is reflected in her representation of her Fund as a "finger-post" of truth and her theological confidence and agency as a ministerial partner.

[96] Records of CH. Spurgeon's library confirm he owned seventeenth-century editions of *The Art of Divine Contentment* (1670), *A Divine Cordial* (1619), *Religion Our True Interest* (1682) and *The Christian Soldier/Heaven taken by storm* (1669) as well as nineteenth-century editions of *Discourses on Important and Interesting Subjects: Being the Select Works of Thomas Watson* (1829) and *Plea for the Godly* (1838).

admiration for Watson "as one of the most concise…illustrative, and suggestive of those eminent divines" (iii). CH. Spurgeon believed that Watson's work, like Brooks,' was particularly "useful to the student and the minister" as it was both "sound doctrine" and simple, "practical wisdom" (iii). Much of Watson's work is also considered "exemplar of the minister's preaching" as it provides both scriptural teaching and clear application of doctrine (Till). Thus, CH. Spurgeon ensured his publication of Watson's *Body* was available to ministers "at wholesale price, on application" (iii). The text is also one of the select Puritan works Spurgeon records as distributed by her Fund, confirming that she too considered it to be essential for ministerial work.[97]

In addition to his godly writing, Watson's life also provides an ideal model of ministerial dedication. Watson was persecuted as a nonconforming minister, though records of his life suggest he was especially perseverant. Like many Puritan preachers Watson was ejected from his rectory, however, even though he was reported, prosecuted, and fined a number of times for holding unlawful religious meetings he "nevertheless…continued his ministry" (Till). Though the Spurgeons were not persecuted to the degree of the Puritans, they considered themselves driven out of the Baptist Union of churches by those who opposed their unwavering Reformed theology.[98] However, even after formally leaving the Union they too continued their ministry. Their experience of theological and ecclesiastical persecution evidently drew them to Puritan writers whose ministry was particularly shaped by extreme challenge and perseverance.

Like Brooks, Watson also addresses a number of opposing theological views in his works, particularly Arminianism. This doctrine challenged and "occupied Puritan theologians" (Wallace 211). Arminianism was particularly concerning for the Puritans as it appeared to

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[97] In her 1887 report Spurgeon notes that she distributed "Watson's 'Body of Divinity'" for ministers to add to their "moderately stocked" shelves (*TY* 24-5).
[98] See chapter four, "Baptist Context and Down-Grade Controversy."

mirror many Calvinistic beliefs yet also directly challenged the Reformed views of predestination and election, two doctrines Puritans were especially passionate about.[99] Though most Puritans "detested" Arminianism, Watson was especially committed to Reformed doctrine and he spoke against Arminianism in a number of writings ("Arminianism"). In his most popular collection of sermons, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, he declares Arminianism is an "uncomfortable doctrine" and an outright "apostasy" (229). He ridiculed the Arminianism emphasis upon human choice, rather than justification or salvation by grace. Such instability, he suggests, implies believers are "today a Peter, tomorrow a Judas; today a member of Christ, tomorrow a limb of Satan" (*Body* 229).

Like Socinianism, Arminianism continued to challenge Reformed Calvinist theology beyond the Puritan era, directly influencing the seventeenth-century early history of and continued divisions within the Baptist tradition. The emerging Baptist movement was initially divided between General Baptists, who embraced some Arminian doctrine, and Particular Baptists, who remained strictly Calvinist. Since the Puritans considered Arminianism to be an "anti-calvinist enemy" (Wallace 215) and the movement had roots in the Spurgeons' own Baptist tradition, both Charles and Susannah celebrated Watson's firm rebuke of heresy and "heartily recommend[ed] [Watson's work] to all lovers of sound doctrine."[100] Though Spurgeon does not directly refer to Arminianism in her reports, she emphasizes her Fund distributes books *specifically* to help the "man of God…repel…cruel and cunning adversaries" (*TY* 380). She also

[99] Arminianism was considered a "betrayal of the Reformation doctrine of justification through grace alone" since it taught that "Christ died for all, not only the elect" (Wallace 215). Therefore, salvation and election were considered dependent on human choice and not assured for eternity.
[100] From the advertisement of CH. Spurgeon's re-published *Body of Divinity* in C.H. Spurgeon's *Types and Emblems: Being A Collection of Sermons Preached on Sunday and Thursday Evenings at the Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 293. CH. Spurgeon declared Arminianism was partially to blame for the contemporary downward trajectory of the Baptist tradition, from Calvinism toward liberal theology: "Arminianism has been the route by which the older dissenters have traveled downward to Socinianism" and "not a few have in these days gone far beyond Evangelical Arminianism, and are on the road to Unitarianism" ("Documents from Down-Grade").

notes that the Reformed theology in the books she distributes is contemporarily referred to as the "despised 'doctrines of grace'" (*TY* 28). Given the Arminian rejection of divine grace in place of human choice, Spurgeon's reference suggests she is acutely aware of the movement's claims. She also declares her Fund books, including Watson's *Body of Divinity*, will empower ministers to "contend valiantly against" such theological "lies'" (*TYA* 28).

The Spurgeons were not only passionate about the works of Brooks and Watson, but Spurgeon's Fund reports and CH. Spurgeon's Puritan collection confirm they also admired the works of the eighteen-century Puritan theologian John Gill (1697-1771). Describing his own ministry CH. Spurgeon wrote that his intent was to "revive the old doctrines of Gill, Owen, Calvin, Augustine and Christ" (quoted in Ella). Here he not only signals his admiration of the early church fathers (Augustine), Calvinism, and the Puritans (Owen) by grouping them with the preaching of Christ, but he also includes the less-recognizable John Gill. Historians typically mark the end of Puritanism in the late seventeenth-century, though Puritan writing and preaching "had an enduring legacy…that fed into Protestant Dissent and Evangelicalism" (Coffee and Lim "Introduction" 6). Thus, although Gill is not of the Puritan "era," his theology, preaching, and writing draw on and echo those immediately before him and may be considered of the Puritan tradition. Gill is also one of the earliest Baptist preachers and theologians; he began ministering to a Baptist congregation in 1719. This congregation, at New Park Street Chapel, was previously led by the Puritan Baptist preacher Benjamin Keach (1668-1704) and eighteen years after Gill died CH. Spurgeon began his ministry in the same church. The Spurgeons, therefore, not only admired Gill as a Puritan-inspired preacher and early Baptist theologian, but as a predecessor of CH. Spurgeon's own ministry.

Both Spurgeons also recognize that Gill's work, particularly his *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (1769–70) and commentaries on the Bible (*Exposition of the Old Testament* and *Exposition of the New Testament* (1748-63), is especially useful for preachers. These two works by Gill also "became a standard part of the library of most Baptist ministers of the day" (Haykin "Gill"). CH. Spurgeon confirms Gill's texts are invaluable for ministers. In his own copy of Gill's *Exposition* he writes that Gill "has no superior" and later declares him "the greatest scholar the church has yet chosen" (*Autobiography* 1.255, 1.308). He, therefore, suggests Gill's works are essential for sermon preparation and "always worth consulting" (1.255). Spurgeon also recognizes usefulness of Gill's work, evident in her Fund's distribution of his *Exposition*. In her reports Spurgeon includes a letter from a minister who received "Dr. Gill's 'Commentary" and celebrated the book as "such a splendid…noble and generous gift" (*TY* 358). In response to the letter Spurgeon notes that this minister was "*very thankful*" (*TY* 358; italics original). By recording and highlighting this gracious response Spurgeon not only emphasizes the preacher's need for texts, but also the ministerial value of Gill's work.

As with Brooks and Watson, CH. Spurgeon also celebrates Gill's unwavering commitment to Reformed Baptist theology and his "sound judgement," a necessary requirement for ministerial texts (*Autobiography* 1.308).[101] He declares Gill's writing is filled with "such sterling honesty" (1.308), especially in light of theological challenges. Gill wrote an entire text dedicated to the defence of Calvinism, *The Cause of God and Truth* (4 vols., 1735–8) and he firmly rebuked contemporary heresy. In 1731 Gill published *A Treatise on the Doctrine of the*

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[101] Though CH. Spurgeon admired and celebrated Puritan writers who embraced his own Calvinist views, he also recognized that minor differences, not theological but in style or approach, were less important. He has the highest praises for Gill, perhaps beyond Brooks and Watson, yet he also admitted he disagreed with Gill on some ecclesiastical issues, whether churches should have associate pastors, and in his sermonic style: "his method of address to sinners…was not likely to be largely useful" (*Autobiography* 1.308).

Trinity in which he emphasizes the significance of the Trinity for Baptist theology. His text was particularly "designed to check the spread of Sabellianism, a heresy among the Baptists that asserted that the Trinity was one person, not three" (Haykin "Gill"). Sabellianism, like the anti-Calvinist views Brooks and Watson denied, also opposed Puritan doctrine and challenged Reformed theology through the nineteenth-century. Gill's writing reflects his concerns regarding Sabellianism, since the doctrine of the Trinity, the three equal persons of Christ, God, and the Spirit, is at the heart of Calvinist doctrine. As a Reformed theologian Gill opposed any position that was "cold-hearted to the doctrine of the Trinity" and he considered "Sabellians…real enemies of the cross of Christ" (Haykin "Gill").

CH. Spurgeon is also passionate about the existence of a three person God. He declares he is especially "sure" regarding "the doctrine of the blessed Trinity" and "these three [Father, Son and Spirit] are one, so that there is but one God…we do verily believe it" ("Need of Decision"). In the same message he also denounces Sabellianism. He states that young ministers, to whom he is addressing, ought to preach the doctrine of the Trinity "notwithstanding" the claims of any "Unitarian, Socinian, Sabellian, or any other error."[102] His warning confirms that he faced the same theological enemy. Gill, therefore, inspires CH. Spurgeon as his predecessor and his "honesty" and sound doctrine aids him, and the young ministers he mentors, in preaching against heresy.

Spurgeon's admiration of Gill's work is confirmed by her Fund's distribution of Gill's commentaries.[103] Spurgeon also boldly addresses anti-trinitarian heresy in her own reports.

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[102]In his address CH. Spurgeon fervidly attacks Sabellianism, along with numerous heresies he believed were spreading throughout the Baptist tradition. He reminds young preachers that they, like Gill before him, must "be decided and bold" for some "Nonconformists are shamefully lax in their convictions" and therefore "it is wise for us to put our foot down and stand still where we are sure we have truth beneath us" ("Need of Decision").
[103] In her 1885 report Spurgeon records a letter from a minister "in the vicinity of London" who writes to confirm the Fund's books, including "Dr. Gill's 'Commentary,'" have "safely arrived" (*TY* 358).

Referring to the doctrines that oppose the Trinity, such as Sabellianism and Unitarianism, Spurgeon announces they are "leav[ing] out of religion that which seems to me to be the very life and joy of it" (*TY* 346). Therefore, when a Unitarian preacher requested books from the Fund she declares his "soul must be well-nigh famished upon 'strange doctrine'" and she will "give him a good portion of savoury meat" by sending him, likely, the works of Gill (*TY* 346). Spurgeon's Puritan training and knowledge also influenced her firm rebuke of heresy. Though she often provides a standard apology, both in terms of her writing, "I mourn my inaptitude and inability," and her address of theology, "I felt almost ashamed of my audacity," she nevertheless continues to present a firm argument, even ridiculing opposing doctrines (*TY* 431, 21). She not only refers to Unitarianism as "strange," but upon receiving "works by *Unitarians*" for apparent distribution by her Fund she denounces the books as "rubbish" (*TY* 181; italics original). She further declares her personal "annoyance and…indignation" for receiving such an appalling donation. Returning to her language of nourishment she labels these works "stone," rather than "bread," for her "poor ministers" (*TY* 181). Instead of simply noting she will not distribute the books, she sarcastically declares she cannot even burn in them in the furnace for they would "choke up the flues!" (181). Her inclusion of such statements in her reports suggest, again, that Spurgeon's reports perform not only as a record of her book work, but also as a denouncement of heresy. In the context of her position as CH. Spurgeon's wife her willingness to boldly address religious opposition, in her own work and words, signals that theological knowledge and defence ought to be part of the ministerial wife's work. Therefore, her study of the works of the Puritans, such as Gill, provide her the training to shape and defend her doctrinal position.

The works of Brooks, Watson, and Gill are tied to the Spurgeons personally, through their shared study and publication of the texts, ministerially, through their reliance upon these

texts in their own work, and theologically, each of these Puritans aid both Charles and Susannah in their continued battle against similar heretical "errors." The writings of these three Puritans, therefore, provide insight into the specific Puritan texts Spurgeon deemed worthy to distribute through her Fund. The texts are also her Puritan sources, those that inform her writing and, more specifically, shape the language of sustenance through which she represents the books of the Fund, the preacher's needs, and her own ministry.

V. "Feeding the flock": Spurgeon's Representation of the Dissenting Minister

In her reports Spurgeon extends the language of sustenance to represent pastoral duties: "feeding the flock of God" (*TY* 152). She continually emphasizes the minister's position and calling is one of "feeding" and the provision of sustenance (*TY* 222, 314, 336, 420-21, *TYA* 356). However, by examining ministerial representation in the work of Brooks, Watson, and Gill, I argue Spurgeon portrays ministerial responsibility and hardship specifically through the Puritan motif of the "hungry shepherd"; a shepherd who is in need of mental food for himself and his congregation. Keeping in mind that Spurgeon is not a preacher, yet she confidently portrays herself as qualified to comment upon the minister's position, the nature of his preaching, and his spiritual needs. We might expect her to remind her readers of her position as wife of "the great preacher," or mention her observation of her husband's work as qualification for her claims. However, she rarely mentions CH. Spurgeon, or her relationship to him, throughout the two volumes of reports. Rather, in her representation of ministerial work she draws from letters she herself has received from ministers and she relies extensively upon Puritan imagery. I suggest, therefore, that Spurgeon claims authority not from her husband, but from the Puritans. By associating her writing and reports with Puritan teaching and her own correspondence with pastors, rather than the ministry of her husband, Spurgeon avoids the suggestion that her Fund is

merely glorifying the work of CH. Spurgeon. Or that she, as his wife, draws her knowledge only from him, her work an appendage to his. Her consistent reference to and reliance upon Puritan imagery ensures her work and claims of ministerial need is validated not by her position as "Mrs. Spurgeon," but by her firm adherence to Reformed, biblical, godly authority. Spurgeon's reliance on Puritan language also validates the plight of ministers and the necessity of their sustenance; the godly men before her also warned the minister must be fed. In doing so, she also reiterates the necessity of her work distributing food to God's shepherds. By emphasizing the connection between the minister's book-hunger and the feeding of his flock Spurgeon suggests to her readers that pastors, and the Puritan doctrine they preach, are central to their *own* faith and sustenance.

Puritan writers also extend the language of sustenance beyond the Scriptures and rely upon metaphors of nourishment in their representation of the minister and his duties. Through his preaching the minister provides the food of the Word to his people, therefore, the overarching Puritan image of the minister is that of a "shepherd" who "feedeth a flock" (Brooks "Unsearchable" 215, 228). According to John Owen "feed[ing] the flock" is "the first and principal duty of a pastor" (quoted in Packer 205). In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* a number of characters perform pastoral duties. However, Bunyan presents four specific ministerial figures as shepherds, referred to as Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere (115-117). These shepherds are representative of the position of the minister and their names reflect the necessary "inward qualities and spiritual equipments of the man divinely called to feed the flock of God" (J. Brown *Puritan* 143). Throughout her reports Spurgeon draws on similar pastoral imagery, representing ministers as "true shepherds of the sheep" and as "under-shepherds who have to 'feed the flock of God'" (*TY* 222, 31). Though Spurgeon echoes the Puritans' depiction of the

shepherd-minister, pastoral imagery is rooted in the Bible and is therefore a common Protestant representation of ministerial work. In both the Old and New Testaments ministers are described as shepherds who must "feed the flock of God" (1 Peter 5:2, Jer. 23:4). Christ, as the great Shepherd, instructs his disciples to minister to his flock: "feed my lambs" (John 21:15). The "feeding" performed by the shepherd is understood through a variety of lenses, from preaching to healing and visiting, within various periods and denominations of Christianity, depending on the tradition's established pastoral duties. However, as with her depiction of Scripture, Spurgeon represents the minister and his work through both biblical and Puritan imagery. She relies on the traditional biblical image of the shepherd, but also incorporates two particular and related Puritan images of sustenance evident in the works of Brooks, Watson, and Gill. Namely, the preaching shepherd who feeds the flock *only* scriptural "marrow" and the "hungry" shepherd who, himself, "also needs to be…fed" (*TY* 214, *TYA* 338).

a. "Food with which the flock…is to be fed": Feeding as Scriptural Preaching

First, in her portrayal of the minister's work, Spurgeon represents the ministerial task of "feeding" as "preach[ing] boldly" and preaching "the marrow and fatness of the gospel…[for this is] their work of feeding the flock of God" (*TY* 151, 314). Spurgeon emphasizes preaching is the primary, if not only, work of the minister and he must "feed" his sheep with the food of the Scriptures alone. Likewise, she portrays CH. Spurgeon's distributed sermons as "real soul-food" for they carry scriptural truth, "the true bread of life," and "feed the soul with the rich dainties of covenant love" (*TY* 345, 118). Since the Bible "was at the heart of Puritan[ism]" and "the Puritans had a profound sense that God built His church primarily by the instrument of preaching" it is not surprising they define ministerial work in terms of preaching from the

Scriptures and about the Scriptures (Hambrick-Stowe 203, Beeke and Jones 1644).[104] The minister's "duty…is to feed the flock" through "diligent preaching of the Word" (Owen quoted in Packer 205). However, it is significant *how* and *why* Puritan writers emphasize scriptural preaching.

In the works of Brooks, Watson, and Gill the Puritan minister's preaching is consistently represented through the act of feeding; specifically "pure" sustenance and the "meat" of Christ. The New Testament references Christ as the spiritual "meat" of the believer, their spiritual provision ("For my flesh is meat" (John 6:55, 1 Cor. 10:4)). Though the Bible provides numerous metaphors for the person of Christ (bread, light, shepherd, vine, rock, lion, lamb), the Puritans are especially fond of the metaphor of Christ as "meat" and "marrow." The ministerial shepherd, therefore, is consistently represented as one who distributes only the "meat" of Christ through the Scriptures. Brooks suggests the minister must preach "Christ to the people" and in doing so he "divid[es] the word…to every one his portion, as… a cook meat to his guests" ("Unsearchable" 208, 218). Watson also relies on the pastoral metaphor of feeding "meat." He notes "Christ said to Peter, Feed my sheep" and therefore ministers, as "Shepherds," must distribute "Christ…all marrow" (*Godly Mans Picture* 219, *Beatitudes* 163). Gill likewise declares "the words or doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ" are "salubrious and nourishing…and meat for strong men" ("Sound Words" 52). He also emphasizes the Scriptures alone are true sustenance for the "food with which the flock and church of God is to be fed" is "the doctrine of Christ" ("The Work" 18). This doctrine must also be "only the pure unmixed gospel of Christ…unadulterated, and clear of all human mixtures" ("The Work" 17). As noted above, in

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[104] Preaching was also at the centre of Puritan worship, replacing readings and church ritual (Leverenz 142). The pulpit was "the most elaborate interior feature of the chapel from which the preacher commanded like a captain on the bridge of a ship" (Jones quoted in *Watts Dissenters Vol.II* 171).

light of their dedication to scriptural truth the Puritans also wrote and preached against religious groups who challenged Reformed, biblical doctrine. Therefore, the Puritan emphasis upon preaching Scripture alone, and their representation of the Word as the highest form of nourishment, is reflective of the seventeenth-century theological context, particularly the defence of biblical truth against sceptics and radicals.

Spurgeon mentions numerous times in her reports that ministers are shepherds who "feed" the flocks, but she chooses only one metaphor to explain *what* they feed: "the marrow and fatness of the gospel" (*TY* 314). Significantly, she relies on this scriptural and Puritan metaphor not only in reference to the sustenance of the Bible, but also the sustenance of the books she distributes. The Puritan texts sent out by the Fund also carry nutrition for they are "books *full* of the marrow and fatness of the gospel" (*TY* 314; italics added). She further explains how the textual food is distributed: the books are a "feast for the satiating of [ministers'] souls" and when "God's ministers…draw therefrom" they receive "supplies for their work of feeding the flock of God" (*TY* 314). Her books feed the shepherd, who in turn feeds his people. By drawing on a Puritan metaphor associated with both the nutrition of Christ and the sustenance the minister provides by preaching Christ, Spurgeon firmly links the operation of her Fund to the necessary distribution of divine food, for both the minister and the flock. Through her distribution of marrow-filled books Spurgeon also implies Puritan texts, and by implication Puritan Reformed theology, is not simply "food," but a "glorious feast"; it is the *ideal* nutrition for the shepherd and his people. In light of the extensive theological controversies challenging nineteenth-century Reformed theology Spurgeon emphasizes Puritan texts, like the Bible, are "real soul-food" and contain "no husks, no adulteration, no secret empoisonment" (*TY* 345). Her use of Puritan imagery in her representation of the minister's duty to preach the Word alone is thus reflective of

both her allegiance to Puritan doctrine and her attempt to defend against similar theological adversaries.

Like the Puritans, Spurgeon also stresses preaching of the Word, specifically, as the minister's primary responsibility. She encourages Dissenting ministers to turn away from the "new gods" of liberal theology and preach only "Scriptural expositions" (*TYA* 28).[105] As noted above, Spurgeon represents herself as equipped to define what the minister's work should be. She suggests not only that they focus on preaching, but also what material they ought to use: "Scriptural Puritan" literature (*TY*A 228). Even though some Dissenting ministers had begun to doubt the Bible's authority she declares their ministries should maintain "entire and scriptural dependence" (*TY* 336). As a Dissenter and minister's wife, she may be qualified to suggest ministers should preach biblical sermons; however, to declare what specific material they ought to use and to further suggest she will send them the best titles, implies she has the experience and knowledge to advise a minister. As CH. Spurgeon's wife she observed his sermon preparation, his reliance upon Puritan material, and the biblical foundation of his sermons. Yet, she implies she is not only qualified through her connection to her husband, but also through her own ministerial work. Both the Puritan writers and Spurgeon firmly emphasize that the minister's work is to feed the "meat" of the Word. Spurgeon, however, not only suggests the Fund's Puritan texts assist in this feeding, but, as argued in chapter two, she represents *herself* as a direct "supplier" of textual meat; a minister to ministers. In reference to her distribution of texts to particularly needy ministers she declares: "I had the satisfaction of supplying him with some 'strong meat'" (*TYA* 38) and "it is "a *real* joy to 'lay meat' to…hungry mouth[s]" (*TYA* 119;

[105] Seventeenth-century scholars note that preaching and the publication of sermons was part of how the Puritans sought to reform the church and emphasize scriptural truth (Beeke and Jones 1642). Spurgeon similarly emphasizes the preaching of the Bible as central to her task of reform; renewing Puritan theology and defending against liberal, heretical views.

italics original). In light of the implied pastoral authority for the distribution of scriptural "meat," Spurgeon's representation of her work is significant. By depicting herself as "lay[ing] meat" Spurgeon suggests she is not merely sending books to preachers, but she is "feeding" the hungry "marrow" and, in turn, performing work similar to that of a shepherd-minister. Here, Spurgeon's portrayal of her work further reflects her re-shaping of the ministerial wife's role. The position requires pastoral support, but also allows for independent ministry, qualified by theological knowledge, that contributes to the "feeding of the flock."

b. "When the Shepherds need to be fed": Ministerial Hunger and Heresy

Spurgeon's emphasis upon the shepherd-minister's duty to distribute and preach the "meat" of Christ suggest that the flock, by implication, is in need of sustenance. Spurgeon relies on a variety of phrases to represent hunger: "faintness and famine," "famished," "famine-fever," and "hungering and thirsting" (*TY* 46, 242, *TYA* 71). This starvation, however, is not of the flock, but, peculiarly, of the shepherd. The church looks to the pastoral shepherd for sustenance, yet Spurgeon declares the minister himself is "ravenous" and in need of food (*TYA* 14). Ministerial hunger, she explains, "is not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a deeply-felt and widespread need of mental food" (*TY* 31). She also proposes that the shepherd's hunger directly correlates to the sustenance of the flock for the minister who is "not fed, cannot very long feed others" (*TY* 70). Ministerial nourishment, therefore, ensures both the "maintenance of their own spiritual strength" and "the instruction and profit of their people" (*TYA* 71).

As noted above, pastoral imagery, particularly the shepherd feeding his flock, is found throughout the Bible; however, the minister's own sustenance is rarely referenced and he never

appears specifically as one who "hungers."[106] Though Spurgeon's language of sustenance relies extensively on Scripture, her portrayal of ministerial hunger draws upon both nineteenth- and seventeenth-century imagery of pastoral work. Her portrayal of a "famine" among preachers corresponds to the financial instability of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministry. Her representation of hunger is also metaphorical and draws on seventeenth-century warnings against weak ministerial doctrine. Spurgeon relies upon language and imagery from contemporary and Puritan representations of pastoral work to emphasize the need for ministerial support, but also to validate ministerial hunger and the work of her Fund, distributing pastoral nourishment. Furthermore, her overarching depiction of ministerial instability as "book hunger" reveals how she shapes traditional imagery of pastoral sustenance to refute opposing theologies and idealize the Puritan Reformed tradition within Dissent.

i. Nineteenth-Century Ministerial Context

In light of Spurgeon's extensive and dramatic portrayal of minister hunger it is helpful to consider if nineteenth-century ministers were, in fact, hungry or suffering from a lack of preaching resources. A brief examination of nineteenth-century pastoral wages provides some context to Spurgeon's perceived "famine" of books. There is limited scholarship available regarding Dissenting ministerial finances; however, the few studies indicate many Dissenting pastors received minimal support for their ministry.[107] Many received significantly low wages and therefore "a vast company of Nonconformist ministers earned their living in secular

[106] There are just two occasions in the Bible that suggest the minister should also "feed" himself. The Old Testament instructs prophets to "eat" the truth they speak to the people (Ez. 3:1-3) and the New Testament references the character of a minister as one who is "nourished up in the words of faith" (1 Tim. 4:6). In both cases the Scriptures are the minister's implied sustenance.

[107] Nonconformity was "one of the most formative influences on Victorian Britain," therefore, "British nonconformity has attracted a lot of attention from scholars" (quoted in K. Brown *Social* 8, 10). However, Kenneth Brown notes that Dissenting scholarship has concentrated on "doctrinal or denominational development" and though there has been some examination of the "complexities of the ordinary believer's religious life" the experiences and financial instability of "ministerial personnel of nonconformity have been largely ignored" (*Social* 10).

occupations, not because their congregations had conscientious objections to supporting them, but because they were too poor to do so" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. II* 240). Though wages varied by denomination and location, and some popular preachers in larger chapels were well paid, the majority of ministers in the mid to late century received such little support that they "had to live very frugal lives" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 208).[108] Some were provided with homes; however, with minimal pay they still needed to "wear decent clothes and to buy books" (Watts 208). They also had the "obligation to respond to the constant pressure to contribute to chapel and denominational funds, missionary societies, and local charities" (Watts 208). Ministerial poverty is further evident in records of the Dissenting Press. According to the 1884 *Baptist Handbook* and 1891 *Christian World* city and rural chapels were in a desperate state with ministers "fighting desperately for bread and butter" (quoted in K. Brown *Social* 158).[109] Numerous factors contribute to the lack of ministerial support including falling chapel growth rates and "changing patterns of urban growth" (K. Brown "Ministerial" 378).[110]

In her reports Spurgeon records hundreds of letters she received from ministers confirming their lack of financial support. Pastors from various denominations wrote to her to apply for texts from the Fund and to inform her of their need. In 1876 she received a letter from a minister lamenting he has "a family of eight children, four of whom are now grown up" and his

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[108] In the mid to late nineteenth century popular Dissenting ministers received up to £1000 a year; however, the average salary for the Baptist minister in 1873 was £75 a year, as low as £50 and even £25 (K. Brown *Social* 157). The maximum stipend for married Methodist ministers with a family to support was as low as £55 (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 208) and some Dissenting congregations of three hundred "paid their ministers only £15 a year" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. II* 245).

[109] Pastors 'wives also lament the dire conditions of raising a family on little income: "from the dreadful strain of pinching and saving…I am so tired at night that I just sit down and nearly sob my heart out" (quoted in K. Brown "Ministerial" 378). An 1837 correspondent to the *Evangelical Magazine* notes the salary paid to some ministers in country districts was "often far below that of a mechanic'" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. II* 249).

[110] With improved transport and a shift of growth from the city to prestigious neighbourhoods, city centre churches were left with declining and generally less wealthy memberships (K. Brown "Ministerial" 378). Rural ministers suffered further as they were "worst affected by agricultural depression" and "chapel rolls [were] stagnating or falling" (K. Brown "Ministerial" 378).

"stipend at first was £60, it is now £70"(*TY* 15). Therefore, his "expenditure…always exceeds [his] stipend" (15). A Baptist minister also writes in 1876 that he has "a wife and five little ones to support, also aged parents" and "£100 is [his] only income to meet all" (*TY* 11). A Baptist minister of a village church confirms his *annual* salary was "not more than £12" (*TY* 65). An 1879 letter from an independent minister further emphasizes the difficulties of such low income: "I need not tell you that a salary of £90 per annum, with seven in family to provide for, does not leave much wherewith…we have great difficulty in making both ends meet" (*TY* 185).

The recorded letters not only contribute to Spurgeon's portrayal of ministerial suffering and the benefits of her Fund, but they also provide significant, previously unexamined, evidence of Dissenting ministerial poverty. Though there have been numerous studies of popular Dissenting preachers and their sermons, there is still little scholarship available on the conditions and life of the lay minister, particularly in relation to ministerial compensation. Aside from Kenneth Brown's seminal study of Dissenting ministry, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales,* and Watts's recent insightful chapter on Dissenting ministerial salaries, "Frugality and Overwork: Pastors and Preachers," many studies of English Dissent provide limited insight into the financial stability (or instability) of the minister's life.[111] [112] Brown suggests "this neglect has arisen because of the difficulties involved in acquiring adequate historical evidence" of ministerial salaries and experiences (*Social* 13).[113] With the

[111] In *The Dissenters Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity*, 2015.
[112] Notably, the recently published *Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England* (Davies, Dunan-Page, and Halcomb, July 2019) includes several chapters on Dissenting ministerial life and experiences in the seventeenth century.
[113] Aside from Methodist preachers, whose salaries were centrally determined, most ministers' salaries, including Baptists and Congregationalists, "were dependant upon individual arrangements between minister and people" (K. Brown "Ministerial" 378). Therefore, "there [are] no centrally determined salary scales to act as a benchmark" (K. Brown *Social* 155). There are some records of ministerial work available and "there is certainly no shortage of ministerial biography and autobiography, its very abundance testifying to the perceived importance of the ministry in Victorian society" (K. Brown *Social* 13). However, Brown notes that biographies tend to idealize the minister

transcription of hundreds of letters from pastors Spurgeon's reports provide extensive records of the wages and financial challenges of ministers, significantly, from various Dissenting denominations. Her texts provide invaluable evidence of pastoral conditions and experiences and ought to be considered in future studies of nineteenth-century Dissenting ministerial work.

The above historical and financial context suggests many nineteenth-century Dissenting ministers suffered from extensive poverty and minimal wages. In her reports Spurgeon references the "pinching poverty borne by our dissenting Pastors" and she laments that "they can scarcely find proper food and clothing for themselves, their wives and their little ones" (*TY* 47, 283). However, throughout her work she primarily represents ministerial poverty through one metaphor: "book hunger" (*TY* 86, 152, 209, *TYA* 77, 243). When Spurgeon first offered to distribute her husband's texts to poor Dissenting ministers she received hundreds more applications than she expected. Historical records suggest ministers' low salaries affected their wallets as well as their libraries. In 1876, one year after Spurgeon began distributing texts, the *Christian World* offered books at reduced prices to country ministers. Within a fortnight "they had received letters from more than 260 men unable, so they claimed, to afford books at all" (K. Brown *Social* 159). Spurgeon also, notably, includes a selection of letters from ministers who imply their lack of financial support directly influences their preaching resources. In 1876 a Dissenting minister writes that he is "receiving £60 a-year" and with "five children to provide for…[he] cannot find money to purchase books" (*TY* 18). Borrowing Spurgeon's language of sustenance another minister declares: "There are nine of us to subsist upon £100 per annum. It

(hagiography) and the autobiographies are "subjective and selective" (*Social* 13). Most focus on theological battles or present the minister's life as a spiritual pilgrimage to be learned from, much like CH. Spurgeon's *Autobiography* (*Social* 13). Brown suggests life stories are challenging sources as "they do not constitute a sample which properly reflects the typical individual" (*Social* 16). In his study Brown relies on obituaries, material from newspapers, denominational publications, private correspondence, institutional archives, and biographies and autobiographies.

costs so much to clothe and feed my boys and girls, that I have nothing left for the clothing and feeding of my bookshelves" (*TY* 11). His records confirm many ministers struggled to support their families and, therefore, they could not "feed" their shelves with material for sermon preparation.

The historical records suggest the need for pastoral resources is a valid component of ministerial poverty. However, Spurgeon portrays "book hunger" not simply as one aspect of ministerial need, but seemingly representative of their entire suffering. She recognizes ministers' need for food and clothing though she focuses upon the "serious book famine" and the "book hunger by which so many poor ministers are hopelessly consumed" (*TY* 234, 209). As if "hungering and thirsting for…books" was equal to, even worse than, physical starvation (*TYA* 71). In fact, she declares books are "as absolutely necessary to mental vigour as food for [ministers'] bodies is essential to physical existence" (*TY* 46). Through this language of sustenance she emphasizes not only the severity of book hunger, but also its extent. Such hunger, she suggests, is a "vast need" and "a serious book-famine prevails all over the land" (*TY* 234). Significantly, Spurgeon ties the minister's starvation to his role as shepherd, further escalating the need for texts. The "famine" of books is "sore in the land…a deeply-felt and widespread need of mental food, by those under-shepherds who have to 'feed the flock of God'" (*TY* 31). In response to the "vast" textual hunger she represents her Fund as the requisite solution: "my Book Fund does, at least…relieve somewhat the pressure of the famine" (*TY* 48). However, she clarifies that ministers are not "hungering and thirsting" for just any books, but "for the refreshments of *good* books" (*TYA* 71; italics added). Therefore, only "solid old-fashioned, Scriptural, Puritanic theology alone goes forth from the Book Fund shelves" for this is the "spiritual food" that "ministers cannot do without" (*TYA* 28, 43, 173). Although her

portrayal of a "famine" among ministers corresponds to the Dissenting pastor's living reality, Spurgeon's language of textual starvation shapes ministerial poverty into "book hunger." In turn, magnifying the value of the Fund and the necessity of Puritan literature for ministerial work.

As suggested above, Spurgeon's representation of ministerial need, particularly through the image of the minister-shepherd who "hungers," draws not only from the nineteenth-century context, but also from Puritan depictions of ministerial work. Through Puritan imagery Spurgeon not only further dramatizes ministerial hunger, but she draws attention to the seventeenth-century link between ministerial nourishment and the defence against heresy.

ii. Seventeenth-Century Ministerial "hunger"

Turning to the writers in Spurgeon's Puritan library, particularly their sermons and didactical texts on pastoral duties, it is strikingly clear that ministers are not only shepherds who feed, but also "shepherds [that] need to be fed" (Watson *Godly Mans Picture* 219). The following consideration of Brooks's, Watson's, and Gill's language of sustenance and imagery of "starving" shepherds provides further context to Spurgeon's overarching metaphor. More specifically, their representation of pastoral nourishment as defence against heresy provides insight into Spurgeon's portrayal her Fund as a response to theological instability associated with ministerial "famine."

In the Puritan context ministerial hunger is tied specifically to the need for scriptural nourishment. The preacher is consistently instructed to "feed on and thrive in the digestion of the [scriptural] food…he provides others" (Owen quoted in Packer 55). For, as Owen warns, "if the word do not dwell with power in [the minister], it will not pass with power from [him]" (quoted in Packer 55). The minister who feeds himself on the Word will, in turn, be of holy character and live a godly life. Puritanism is dedicated to biblical truth and living that truth

through godliness (Coffee and Lim "Intro" 2). The Puritans also define themselves by their intense "word-centered piety" (Cambers *Godly* 13). They believe holy living, including reading and studying Scripture, devotional practices, and prayer, was "a lifelong exercise" and necessary "preparation for glorification with Christ in heaven" (Hambrick-Stowe 203).[114] Thus, Puritan writers firmly instruct ministers to be "be holy [men]" nourished by the Word and "Puritan quotations abound on this subject" (Beeke and Jones 1673-4). In his 1657 sermon on "the nature of the pastoral work" Richard Baxter (1615-1691) suggests "a practical Doctrine must be practically preached" and the shepherd-minister "must study [the Scriptures] as hard how to live well, as how to preach well" (24). Owen similarly instructs the minister to feed himself and "preach to his own heart" before he "preaches his sermon well to others" (quoted in Beeke and Jones 1702). Their emphasis upon ministerial scriptural nourishment reflects the Puritan commitment to the Word; however, it also corresponds to the seventeenth-century theological context and prevalence of heresy.

The Puritan writers in Spurgeon's Puritan library not only suggest pastors should be nourished by the Word, but their texts are filled with dramatic warnings against the dangers of ministers who "feed and feast…other men's souls…but starve their own" (Brooks "Unsearchable Riches" 218). Ministerial sustenance is critical, they suggest, for the pastor who hungers is not only unable to feed his flock, but also unable to protect them, or himself, from falsehood and heresy. In his collection of sermons on the book of Ephesians, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" (1655), Brooks dedicates a selection of sermons to "the great duty of preachers" and the requirements of those who hold "the office of a faithful minister" (207, 223). Here he provides instructions for how ministers ought to preach and addresses the consequences associated with

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[114] It is this zeal and dedication to individual devotion that set them apart from other Protestants (Coffee and Lim "Intro" 4).

ministerial hunger. With a tone of disdain Brooks declares there is "no misery, no hell" worse than shepherds who "starve their own…souls" (218). For, he argues, they are not merely weak shepherds, but outright "monsters" (218). His passionate criticism of ministers who allow themselves to "starve" is reflective of his awareness of the challenging theological context of ministerial work: "There are many who place all their religion in opinions, in brain-sick notions, in airy speculations," such as those of the Antinomians he denounced ("Jewels" 237). In order to defend himself and his flock from "many sorts of hypocrites" Brooks orders young shepherds to be nourished by the Scriptures:" let the Word be so concocted and digested by you, as that you turn it into a part of yourselves" (221). The Bible, he teaches, is not only sustenance, but also "a sword to defend you" and the flock to whom you minister (*Apples* 212).

Though she is not as stern as Brooks, Spurgeon similarly warns that ministers who are "true shepherds of the sheep" must "be taught, and fed, and built up" (*TY* 222, 338). Ministerial hunger is "a grievous hinderance to [the pastor's] service" for unless he is nourished he "cannot very long feed others" (*TY* 70). In her reports Spurgeon also warns of the prevalence of erroneous doctrine, which she characterizes as "error, superstition, ignorance, fanaticism, and gross sensuality [that] are all ranged against God" (*TY* 416). Echoing Brooks's portrayal of the "airy speculations" of opposing theology Spurgeon declares that the teachings of such doctrines are merely "hazy and questionable utterances" (*TYA* 29). As noted above, the teachings of Antinomianism challenged Reformed faith in Brook's time, but also re-emerged in the nineteenth-century and threatened the Spurgeon's Baptist doctrine. Spurgeon not only admired the work of Brooks, but also spoke passionately against their shared theological enemy. Significantly, she borrows Brooks's approach for defending against "hypocrites" and suggests opposition to false teaching must begin with the minister's own doctrine and nourishment.

Echoing Brooks's link between ministerial nourishment and the defence of scriptural truth she emphasizes ministers who "suffer slow starvation" are spiritually weak, "their mental powers flag and droop" (*TY* 234). Thus, they require nourishment and spiritual strength to feed the flock but also, she suggests, to "contend valiantly" against the spread of heresy from the "'so-called 'cultured' preachers of the present day" (*TYA* 29).

Thomas Watson also emphatically addresses the dangers of ministerial hunger. In a sermon on pastoral duties he declares ministers must follow the example of "Christ, the great Shepherd of Souls" and through preaching Scripture, "feed[] Souls with the Bread of Life" ("St. John" 168). He reminds pastors that their sheep, "the Saints," are always hungering for knowledge and in need "fresh pasture…to feed in" ("St. John" 168). However, given that the shepherd's duty is to feed others, Watson dramatically laments "how sad is it when the *Shepherds* need to be fed?" (*Godly Mans Picture* 219; italics original). Addressing both the minister and the church Spurgeon poses a similar rhetorical question emphasizing the significance of ministerial nourishment for the shepherd and his flock: "Do they ever remember that [ministers] also need[] to be taught, and fed, and built up…?" (*TYA* 338). Here, both Watson and Spurgeon imply ministerial sustenance is not merely suggested, but critical; hungry shepherds cannot feed sheep. Following his rhetorical warning of pastoral hunger Watson describes how the minister must feed and gain knowledge: "a man of God must suck the fire of zeal, out of the breasts of Scripture" (*Godly Mans Picture* 220). Relying on language of sustenance he suggests the milk of the Word is for the minister's own nourishment and his feeding of the flock. Like Brooks, Watson associates the minister's spiritual strength and defense with his sustenance. For the pastor who digests the word also "hold[s] the Sword of the Spirit" and can therefore "fight against those errors which carry damnation" (*Beatitudes* 9).

Watson and Spurgeon also share similar doctrinal challenges, specifically the anti-Reformed teachings of Arminianism. Spurgeon consistently echoes the Puritan approach to doctrinal defense, suggesting the minister's nourishment is critical to the fight against theological errors. Similar to Watson's battle imagery she declares that the nourished minister, who consumes the books she sends, has "a sheaf of swift arrows" and "weapons of war" (*TY* 171). Therefore, he is able to defend the flock and fight the "campaign against the powers of evil" (171). In the context of rampant heresy Watson warns ministers that they, "as springs that hold the water of life," must be filled with pure biblical truth and "not be poisoned" (*Christian's Charter* 14). For, he emphasizes, it is the pastor's duty to ensure the flock remain steadfast and "if the people have a taint of errour, the *Ministers of Christ* must season them with wholesome words" (*Christian's Charter* 12-13; italics original). In her own ministerial warning Spurgeon echoes Watson's metaphor of theological purity. She declares that pastors who fall victim to erroneous doctrine must "forsake the polluted waters drawn from earthly sources, and return to the pure and blessed wells of salvation" (*TYA* 245). When the shepherd feeds himself and his flock with the "bread of life" he avoids any heretical "secret empoisonment" (*TY* 345).

John Gill provides an equally passionate warning to starving ministers. In his 1734 sermon, "The Duty of A Pastor to his People," Gill addresses the pastor's responsibilities to his flock. He firmly cautions that the minister who does not "take heed of his gifts," by nourishing himself through "daily reading the scriptures," is simply a "shepherd of no account, who is good for nothing" (3-5). His concern for the minister's own sustenance is reflective of his observation that a shepherd and flock have "a mutual relation, a close union" and "are in some sense one" (7). Therefore, the minister's self-provision and commitment to truth is intimately tied to the flock's sustenance: "a pastor, by *taking heed to himself*, takes heed to his flock" (7; italics

original). Likewise, Spurgeon emphasizes the shared hunger of the shepherd and flock. She warns that "shepherds…who lack and suffer" will "famish[…] the whole community" (*TY* 336-7). Gill also declares that pastors' faith and sustenance are paramount. They must be "nourished up with the words of faith and sound doctrine" for this ensures "their spiritual life" and, in turn, their flocks' "is supported and maintained" ("Deuteronomy" 32). Throughout her reports Spurgeon draws on this Puritan language of nourishment to dramatize the significance of the minister's need. The "under-shepherd" *must* have "mental food…to feed the flock of God (*TY* 31). For, when the "minister's table [is] well provided [the church] shall be fed with the finest of the wheat" (*TY* 337).

Echoing Brooks and Watson, Gill similarly warns that the shepherd's sustenance is directly linked to the prevention of theological errors within the church. He associates the nourishment of the Bible, "the sincere milk of the word," with the preacher's ability "to discern between good and evil" ("Sound Words" 52). The minister who hungers from a lack of scriptural sustenance is unable to "shun error, and avoid false doctrines" ("Duty of A Pastor" 6). Spurgeon further emphasizes this correlation; "the glorious gospel" is the only "nourishment" that provides the preacher "mental food" and "ammunition for the combat with evil" (*TY* 45, 46, 70). In light of Gill's passionate defence of Reformed theology against rising heresies, particularly Sabellianism, he emphasizes it is the shepherd's duty to "take heed to themselves, and to the flock" by ensuring their own "doctrine" is "pure, and incorrupt…the doctrine of Christ" ("The Work" 18). He, therefore, repeatedly warns ministers to "feed" both "themselves, and…the flocks committed to them…with the words of faith and sound doctrine" ("The Doctrine" 43). Only then can they "espy dangers…of error or heresy [that]…spring up in the churches" ("The Doctrine" 43).

In her 1884 report Spurgeon notes that she received applications for books from various Dissenting denominations, although one of the ministers was "a Unitarian!" (*TY* 346). Unitarian theology is an anti-trinitarian movement, similar to Sabellianism, the doctrine Gill vehemently opposed. Spurgeon writes that the "principles of Unitarians" cause her "much distress," however, she does not deny the minister's request (346).[115] Rather, she declares she was "drawn to give him a good portion of savoury meat, fearing that his soul must be well-nigh famished upon 'strange doctrine'" (346). Her reply confirms her awareness and rejection of opposing "strange" doctrines and signals her association of scriptural Reformed truth (and texts) with "good" nourishment. Heretical theologies, she implies, starve the minister and contribute to the widespread famine. Thus, ministers must consume the "savoury meat" of Reformed Puritan doctrine for this "supplies…their work of feeding the flock of God" and "arm[s]" them "to repel…cunning adversaries" (*TY* 346, 314, 380).

In their portrayal of ministerial work Spurgeon and the Puritan writers consistently represent the pastoral role through language of sustenance, imagery of the hungry shepherd, and a cautionary warning against starvation. The shepherd's soul is first nourished, "let the Word be digested by you" (Brooks "Unsearchable Riches" 221), which ensures he is "more capable of instructing and feeding the people" (Gill "The Work" 26) and, therefore, equipped through "the Sword of the Spirit" to "fight against those errors which carry damnation" (Watson *Beatitudes* 9). Furthermore, their passionate declarations against ministerial hunger imply that the image of

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[115] Despite Spurgeon's limited resources, reflected by her initial intention to distribute only a few titles to poor ministers of the Baptist tradition, she rarely denied a request for a Puritan book, even from those who were not ministers. In an unpublished 1877 letter (See Appendix 1, image 3) Spurgeon replies to an individual's request for books by first reminding them that her texts are "limited to Pastors of Churches" (underline original). She explains that this limitation "is not willingly, but of necessity" for "time and strength and funds would be overwhelming taxed." Yet, as with the case of ministers from various denominations, even those outside of Dissent, she admits that she cannot deny a request for books: "my heart could not refuse your earnest desire to possess the volumes." The letter reflects Spurgeon's compassion for those that cannot afford books as well as her intention to distribute Puritan texts, and Reformed theology, as far and wide as possible.

"Shepherds [who] need to be fed" is not simply a quant metaphor for pastoral training, but, with the prevalence of heresy, it is a matter of spiritual life and death: "by their non-drinking of the waters of life…these [ministers] loose lives, lead their flocks to hell" (Watson *Godly Mans Picture* 220, Brooks "Unsearchable Riches" 216). Spurgeon is equally passionate, warning that the "shepherd's" hunger may result in the entire flock "famishing" (*TY* 336-7). However, she not only echoes the Puritan emphasis upon ministerial sustenance, but she also strategically shapes pastoral hunger to garner support for her Fund.

iii. "If YOU will do all you can": Garnering Support for the Fund

Spurgeon's work focuses on both pastoral need and the defence of Reformed truth; therefore, the Puritan metaphor of ministerial hunger satisfied only by scriptural nourishment legitimizes the context and necessity of her Book Fund. By drawing on this particular metaphor of spiritual need Spurgeon links her work to the authority of the Puritan tradition. The Puritan writers previously warned of the dangers of shepherds who "starve." By drawing on their cautionary language Spurgeon further emphasizes and validates ministerial hunger and the need for nourishment, which she suggests, her "Fund so blessedly relieves" (*TY* 242). She also borrows the Puritan correlation between pastoral sustenance and defence of Reformed theology. In light of the doctrinal challenges from both new and similar "old" theologies of the seventeenth-century, spiritual nourishment was equally, if not more, critical for nineteenth-century Dissenting ministers and churches.

Spurgeon relies heavily on Puritan imagery and language; however, she slightly alters her representation of ministerial hunger. Nineteenth-century ministers, she suggests, are "starving" spiritually, not from a lack of biblical sustenance, but, as noted above, they suffer from "book-hunger" (*TY* 86). By re-framing their need Spurgeon further elevates the necessity of her Fund

to gain support not only for her distribution of texts, but also for her revival of Puritanism within Dissent. Like the Puritans, she suggests the preacher must eat "heavenly manna" and "meat" (*TYA* 337, 201). However, his required sustenance is not only the Word, but *also*, "wise and holy books," specifically "Scriptural, Puritanic theology" (*TYA* 242, 28). The minister ought to only "eat" literature from "Puritan writer[s]…[the] holy men of God" who "shed light on the grand truths of the living Word" (*TYA* 174). For, she argues, these are the books that provide "a glorious feast" and "abundant supplies for…feeding the flock of God" (*TY* 314). Although Spurgeon does not claim Puritan books are equal to the Bible, she comes close. She suggests "the Divine Comforter," the Holy Spirit, "inspired [Puritan writers] to write" (*TYA* 338). Therefore, He will "enlighten, and guide" the minister's "prayerful perusal of [the] book," echoing the illumination of Scripture (338).[116] By representing Puritan books as nourishment that satisfies the minister's hunger, Spurgeon elevates the texts above all other theological works, particularly those of liberal theology that leave the minister "well-nigh famished" (*TYA* 250).

Recalling Spurgeon's own familiarity with Puritan texts and theology, she has, through sermon preparation with her husband and her own study, witnessed how these texts inspire and support biblical truth and preaching. Spurgeon relies on her own theological experience and education, not simply her husbands,' as the authority through which to proclaim the value and necessity of Puritan books. Furthermore, through her declaration of ministerial hunger and the necessity of the Puritan text Spurgeon suggests the ministerial wife may embrace and promote theological doctrine.

Although it is the pastor who "eager[ly] hungers for 'Puritan Divines,'" Spurgeon confirms ministerial hunger is directly tied to the well-being of the flock: "I need not enlarge the

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[116] She also declares: "the mind which feeds others must itself be supplied with mental food…the Holy Spirit constantly uses the writings and expositions of godly men [the Puritans] for this purpose" (*TYA* 241).

absolute necessity which exists for a minister to possess books if he would be an efficient teacher and preacher - the mind which is itself not fed, cannot very long feed others" (*TY* 114, 70). By suggesting the minister's hunger for books, like his hunger for Scripture, directly corresponds to the sustenance of the flock Spurgeon in turn represents the nourishment of books as critical to both ministerial work and the stability of the church. She, therefore, suggests Dissenting readers of her reports ought to help alleviate the minister's suffering by supporting the Fund; the money and books received are, by implication, for the donors own benefit. For, she writes, "when you are helping the Book Fund…you greatly enrich the minds of many poor Pastors" and in turn "you lovingly help to feed the Lord's sheep in the wilderness" (*TY* 431). Here, Spurgeon's language of sustenance not only validates her work, but garners support for it. Keeping in mind that her Fund partially operates through textual and financial donations, Spurgeon relies on dramatic imagery of hunger to entice, and even implicate, her readers. Such as her following lamentation: "I have often wished that Christian people could more generally and constantly realize the craving of their pastor's heart for mental food and nourishment" (*TYA* 338). She implies that without their support ministers will be left to "starve." Following her emphasis upon the "mentally-famished" preachers" she directly addresses her Dissenting audience: "YOU, dear reader, whoever you may be…do all you can to help one such poor minister before the close of another year" (*TYA* 242, *TY* 337-8; emphasis original). By shaping her language of sustenance into a direct, unabashed call for financial support Spurgeon continues to legitimize her work and the necessity of Puritan textual "meat" for the betterment of the minister, the flock, and the reader.

VI. "The nursing-mother of…Pastors": Spurgeon's Representation of Her Position

"'Tis the work of a Minister to drop in comfort, therefore he is said to *hold* forth the brests as a nurse" ~ Thomas Watson

By drawing on Puritan language of sustenance Spurgeon not only establishes her Fund work as critical to the pastor's life and ministry, but as the "supplier" of texts she also portrays *herself* as directly feeding God's shepherds (*TYA* 28). Her provision for the minister-shepherd is two-fold: she represents herself as an "advoca[te]…on their behalf" and as the provider of textual food she embraces a maternal role, giving sustenance to the ministers as a "nursing-mother" nurtures her children (*TY* 285, 378). As pastoral "advocate" she suggests she is qualified to speak on behalf of God's men. As "nursing mother," a Puritan image associated with the minister who feeds the congregation from the "breasts" of Scripture, she draws on both maternal provision and ministerial authority. Thus, her self-representation further illustrates her re-working of the ministerial wife's position; it may be one of *both* supportive and independent ministry.

Spurgeon's emphasis upon the significance of the minister's provision, supported by the Puritan warning against ministerial hunger, reflects her attempt to draw attention to what she suggests is an unrecognized "famine." Throughout her reports she declares the suffering of pastors, particularly their low wages and lack of resources. She also suggests the minister's "hunger" is ignored by the Dissenting churches: "Why do not [the ministers'] congregations open their eyes, their ears, their hearts, their purses?" (*TY* 233). By publishing the letters from ministers, which describe in their own words their textual and financial suffering, and drawing attention to their plight through her writing, Spurgeon becomes their voice and advocate. She presents herself as a humble "almoner" and is quick to remind her readers she is merely a "messenger of mercy," providing God's gifts (*TYA* 370, 61). Yet, in in her passionate defence of

ministers she performs as the representative of their cause, declaring: “I am constrained to take up lamentation for them” (*TY* 285). She writes that she has “so often and so urgently pleaded the cause of poor ministers” and is “perplexed as to what fresh arguments should be brought forward, what new and potent advocacy should be used on their behalf” (*TY* 285). I suggest, however, that in her “lamentation” she becomes their advocate.

Throughout her reports she passionately, and at times angrily (“I do not know how I am going to write calmly”), defends the suffering minister and implicates ignorant churches (*TYA* 200). She celebrates, even idolizes, pastors as “ambassador[s] of the king of kings” and “heroes” (*TY* 222). Yet, they are “kept at a starvation point” (*TY* 283). She suggests her work is directed at alleviating this suffering, but she also implies Dissenting churches need to increase their support for ministers. With a tone of disdain she accuses Dissenting churches: “it is the absolute thoughtlessness and indifference to their minister’s welfare and comfort which characterize some churches” (*TYA* 380). She is not merely asking for their support, but also placing blame on the churches for the ministers’ suffering. With sarcastic rhetorical questions she criticizes the churches’ idleness: “are members of the church made of stone?”, “why do not their congregations open their eyes, their ears, their hearts, their purses? Is not the labourer worthy of his hire?” (*TYA* 381, *TY* 223). Following her accusation of the churches’ blindness and stingy hearts she, a minister’s wife, proceeds to implicate male church leaders: “are the deacons frozen into icebergs? Have they none of the warmth of human compassion in their hearts, that they thus selfishly and sinfully keep all their good things to themselves?” (*TYA* 381). As a concerned Dissenting congregant she questions the lack of support for preachers; however, her dramatic indictment of the churches is shocking, even to the modern reader. Her comments are in published reports, accessible to all Dissenting readers “of stone.” She portrays herself as a

delicate "messenger of mercy," yet in her writing she challenges men of religious authority. While confidently accusing church leaders of insensitivity, selfishness, and sin, she implies they are responsible for widespread suffering. Her unabashed commentary is reflective of her self-imposed position as advocate; a position not defined by gender, but by theological knowledge and representative of the work and agency possible for the ministerial wife.

Relying on her pattern of traditional apology and confident assertion Spurgeon portrays herself not only as a distributor of ministerial "food," but also as the voice of ministers, a champion of their cause. She suggests it is "far beyond [her] skill and strength" to consider causes and solutions to the ministerial hardship (*TYA* 370). Yet, she claims authority through qualification by declaring herself "well acquainted with their trials and privations" and thus capable of writing with "serious certainty on the matter" (*TYA* 200, *TY* 47). Her apology and assertion is reflective of her attempt to confidently, yet cautiously, negotiate the boundaries of her established position. Though she presents herself as submitting to her husband, as man and minister, in marriage, she also suggests her personal experience and theological knowledge qualifies her to boldly take on her own ministry. Ministry in which she indicts those, even male leaders, who ought to act for the minister's cause. She also extends her conviction beyond the congregation and directly implicates her readers. Relying on another set of accusatory rhetorical questions she declares: "What think you, my readers?...[the suffering ministers] are His ambassadors" and "when they…tell [God] of…the ungenerous policy of its inhabitants, do you not think His righteous anger must be stirred against such a people? Should you wonder if He avenged His own elect, and that speedily?" (*TY* 338) By associating the churches' and readers' ignorance with God's disapproval, Spurgeon elevates the severity of their idleness and ministerial suffering. Ministers are not simply preachers, but "ambassadors" of God. Ministerial

support is not simply charity, but divine obedience. Idleness is not only selfish, but punishable by the King. Furthermore, by drawing on God's punishment she implies that her cause, ministerial hunger, is also God's.

Spurgeon continues her advocacy by suggesting that her readers, who are at risk of God's punishment, ought to extend their support to the minister by supporting her work. She states that if the minister's "people (who ought to help them more) either cannot or will not do so, we at least, dear friends, will do all in our power to encourage their weary hearts" (*TY* 16). How might her readers help the minister? She reiterates: "Let us give him some books…and greater diligence in his preparation of sermons (*TY* 410). Spurgeon may be a minister's wife, one who many suggest is overshadowed by her husband, but here she is also a crusader fighting for change. She accuses male leaders, entire churches, and her own readers for ignoring their minister's sufferings - "are they blind, and deaf, and altogether foolish?" - while also simultaneously and strategically garnering support for her own ministry (*TY* 422).

In her reports Spurgeon suggests she is speaking on behalf of ministers, pleading their cause; however, in her Fund work and through the language of sustenance, she, herself, is feeding the hungry men. Though she is a mother, she and CH. Spurgeon had twin boys, in her writing Spurgeon avoids representing herself through any form of maternal language or imagery.[117] Perhaps to avoid any suggestion the she, rather than God, provides for ministers, or an attempt to present her work as genderless, distinct from any suggestion that her ministry is simply an extension of her position in the home. However, on the singular occasion that Spurgeon uses maternal language she draws on one particular image, that of "nursing-mother" (*TY* 378). She declares she is a "mother" of ministers, who, in turn, are her "promising children"

[117] Thomas and Charles, born in 1856.

(*TY* 378, 202). Upon first glance the reference implies Spurgeon is embracing a motherly, feminine representation of her work, one that does not fit easily with her role as an assertive "provider" of "meat" and advocate of ministers. However, when considered in the context of Brooks's, Watson's, and Gill's Puritan pastoral imagery, that I've argued she draws on throughout her representation of the minister, this maternal position is also one of agency.

In Puritan representations of ministerial work the minister appears not only as a shepherd who feeds, but also as a mother who labours, nurses, and provides the "milk" of the Word. Bunyan refers to his pastoral work through maternal imagery, suggesting "in [his] preaching" he "travailed to bring forth Children to God (*Grace Abounding* 81).[118] In a 1723 sermon Cotton Mather (1663-1728) declares "Ministers are…Mothers too…Are not their Lips the Breasts thro' which sincere Milk of the Word has pass'd unto you, for your Nourishment?" (quoted in Leverenz 1).[119]

Referring to Spurgeon's library of Puritans we find a similar maternal depiction of masculine ministry. Brooks, like Bunyan, suggests the preacher must have "pains of travail" for the "man-child born into the world" until they have "Christ…anew formed in them" ("Unsearchable Riches" 221). He also relies on the metaphor of a nurse to suggest ministers rely on God, not their people, for their reward; as a "nurse looks not for her wages from the child, but from the parent" ("Unsearchable Riches" 226). The minister's position is defined by the maternal metaphors of both birthing and nursing. Relying on motherly imagery Watson further illustrates how the minister's "feeding" of the church echoes the mother's provision for her child.

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[118] The metaphor also corresponds to the biblical representation of ministerial work. Drawing on the apostle Paul's reference to his ministry on behalf of the churches in Galatia: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).
[119] Increase Mather (1639-1723) likewise suggests ministers are nursing mothers "from whom [the church] may receive the sincere milk of the Word" (*David Serving* 31).

He suggests the Scriptures are "breasts" that provide "Milk of Consolation" (*Body of Divinity* 15). Gill also emphasizes the nourishment of the Scriptures as "the sincere milk of the word" and this is what the pastor ministers to his "babes" ("The Work" 17, "Sound Words" 52). Watson firmly declares the minister ought to both "suck" from the "breasts of Scripture" as well as "*hold* forth the brests" to the people "as a nurse" (*Christian's Charter* 12-13; italics original). Here, the preacher not only drinks the Word, but, as nurse, he provides the nourishing milk for the hungry people to "suckle." Thus, for Puritan writers the image of the minister as nurse is, ironically, not one of womanliness or subservience, but of authority.[120] The metaphor emphasizes both the significance of the minister's position and the dependence of the church upon him, therefore, "the minister gains power in being the conduit for God's milk" (Leverenz 2).[121]

Though Spurgeon does not rely extensively on maternal language it is significant that her singular maternal reference represents her work not through nineteenth-century ideas of the minister's wife's "maternal solitude," but through the Puritan ministerial image of "nursing mother" (*Hints* 23). In the context of Spurgeon's reliance upon Puritan ideas of pastoral sustenance (the nourishment he requires and provides), her position as nursing mother emphasizes not her femaleness, but her spiritual agency and provision. She also adapts the image to her purpose, validating her work and re-imaging the "help meet" as a position that may

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[120] Though Puritan writers often represent their pastoral ministry through imagery associated with the woman's experience, "Puritan scripturalism stressed the necessity for female subordination and obedience: 'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection' (1 Timothy 2:11)" (Hughes 295). Puritan women were not formally permitted to preach, although some attempted, such as Anne Hutchinson who was eventually silenced and banished from her community (Gillespie 32). Although Puritan women were socially restricted and not formally able to hold positions within the church, "Puritan divines themselves understood that saintliness or godliness created a spiritual context in which conventional restrictions on gender roles could not and should not be enforced" (Willen 567).

[121] Puritan maternal language is also associated with the Song of Solomon in the Bible. The Puritans "translated" the book into an "allegory of group nourishment, not individual pleasure" which "legitimized their allegory" (Leverenz 1). The Bible was considered "God's milk; the minister was the breast at which the congregation suckled" (Leverenz 1).

be both maternal and ministerial. Though she is not a minister providing scriptural milk to the congregation, Spurgeon provides Puritan "meat" to God's men, who, without the support of their churches, are dependent on her. Her work thus ensures "promising" ministerial "children" receive sustenance and grow to be "mothers" in their own right (*TY* 202).

Chapter Four:
"Pointing wayfarers": The Book Fund, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the Defence of Puritan Dissent

Now, more than ever before, is the…work of the Book Fund needed. In these days of doubt, and deliberate divergence from the plain paths of the old Gospel, it is comforting to know that *this* finger-post stands steadfast, still pointing wayfarers to the right road, and that those who follow its guidance need not fear being belated in the grounds of Giant Despair, or finding themselves shut up in Doubting Castle ~ Spurgeon, 1887

In her Book Fund report for June 1882 Spurgeon expresses her "intense pity" for "bookless ministers" and, again, reminds her readers that "good books" are necessary for "sermon-preparation" (*TY* 220). For, she declares, "in the kingdom of grace there is but one John Bunyan" (220). She explains Bunyan is the rare "man of God" whose material, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, "was fashioned with no other aids than his Bible and Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'" (220-21). Unlike Bunyan's miraculous work, the ministers she corresponds with "must have helpful books if they are to preach good sermons" (220). She continues to praise Bunyan as the "wonderful 'Dreamer,'" proclaiming his inspired narrative is "immortal" (*TY* 253, 220). Spurgeon's dramatic portrayal of *Pilgrim's Progress* is reflective not only of the ministerial need for books, especially those as helpful as Bunyan's "sweet allegory," but also of the immense popularity of the text within both Victorian and Dissenting cultures (*TY* 253). *Pilgrim's Progress* was widely published and "endlessly quoted" by nineteenth-century writers and novelists. The book became a model for both spiritual pilgrimage and secular "portrayals of the traveller or wanderer" (Mason 159, 156). Furthermore, Bunyan's text embodied a "seminal and revered place" within the history and culture of Dissent (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 58). The book was thoroughly "woven into the warp and weft of Nonconformist experience" (Hofmeyr

Portable Bunyan 61). Thus, for nineteenth-century Dissenters, *Pilgrim's Progress* performed not only as a devotional text, but also as a preaching tool, mini-missionary, and "shadow-Bible" that informed "a language…shared by most evangelicals" (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 59). Spurgeon's praise for Bunyan would, therefore, resonate with her Dissenting readers, many of whom likely considered *Pilgrim's Progress* "second only to the Bible" (Hofmeyr *Portable Bunyan* 58).

Though Bunyan's text was foundational to Dissenting identity, and on the bedside of every chapel member, it may be argued that the book held even more significance for Spurgeon. As noted in chapters one and two, Bunyan's writing was crucial to the life and work of Charles Spurgeon. As a Puritan Dissenter, also of Bunyan's Baptist tradition, CH. Spurgeon especially admired Bunyan's work and his own sermons and texts were filled with illustrations drawn from *Pilgrim's Progress*. It has been argued that Bunyan's text and language shaped CH. Spurgeon's entire theology and conception of the Christian life (Morden 26).[122] CH. Spurgeon himself announced that "next to the Bible, the book I value most is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*" (*Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress* 11). He not only read the text "at least a hundred times," but also gifted a copy to his future wife (*Pictures* 11).[123] Near the end of his life CH. Spurgeon intended to collect a series of his addresses on characters from *Pilgrim's Progress*, later published by his son, Thomas, in 1903. In the text's preface Thomas suggests Bunyan's allegory was his father's "great favorite" and he was "so in love with Bunyan" that "the language of The Illustrious Dreamer was to the mind of the Tabernacle Pastor. They spake the same tongue (*Pictures* 3,4). Of the extensive studies examining CH. Spurgeon's reliance on Bunyan scholars

[122] Having closely examined CH. Spurgeon's sermons Christian George confirms Charles frequently cited *Pilgrim's Progress* and consistently preached on the subject of pilgrimage. Bunyan's allegory and themes "played a significant role in the formulation of [CH.] Spurgeon's thinking and theology" (George 116).
[123] See chapter one for a discussion of how the text influenced and shaped the Spurgeons' early relationship.

are quick to cite Charles's gifting of *Pilgrim's Progress* to Susannah as evidence of Bunyan's influence on his life, ignoring any consideration of how the book inspired Susannah's own work.

I. "More than ever before, is the…Book Fund needed": Chapter Argument

In this chapter I argue *Pilgrim's Progress* was also significant to Spurgeon's life and writing, not merely because of her husband's love for Bunyan, but because the text shaped her own spiritual pilgrimage and experience with godly books. Years after she received the inscribed copy from Charles, Spurgeon records in the *Autobiography* that at a time when she was "cold and indifferent to the things of God" *Pilgrim's Progress* provided the "peace and pardon [her] weary soul was longing for" (2.6,7). Here, she confirms the book assisted her in the despondency of her young faith and it became "very precious as well as helpful" to her spiritual life (2.7). Her reports also suggest Bunyan's text informed her representation of how Puritan texts, such as those distributed by the Fund, operate. They are not merely lifeless objects, but spiritual agents capable of "pardoning" and transforming souls.

Given that *Pilgrim's Progress* was foundational to Spurgeon's Dissenting tradition, her husband's ministry, her relationship with Charles, her own faith, and her portrayal of godly books, it is not surprising she praises Bunyan's "sweet allegory" in her reports. However, aside from her reference to the "immortality" of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spurgeon rarely mentions the text in her two volumes of reports.[124] Her reports are not only facts and figures of the Fund, but also devotional writing. She often relies on images, from the Bible, nature, and various texts, to illustrate spiritual themes and the work of the Fund. Yet she rarely draws on the extensive

[124] Aside from a few brief devotional passages there are only two direct quotations drawn from *Pilgrim's Progress* in the entirety of her Fund reports (*TY* 253). In her report for 1880 Spurgeon describes the grounds of their new home, in Westwood, Beulah Hill, as reminiscent of "Bunyan's…'Delectable Mountains'" (*TY* 124). Later in her report for 1883 she refers to Christian's "deep valley," reminding her readers of the importance of faith in dark times (*TY* 273).

imagery from, arguably, the most influential text, aside from the Bible, in her life. However, Spurgeon's limited reliance upon *Pilgrim's Progress* is strategic. In light of the established prominence of the text within the Dissenting tradition, and thus her readers' familiarity with the book, her selective references perform as signposts, highlighting and validating significant aspects of her Fund work. Here, I argue that her most detailed reference from her 1887 report, the epigraph and focus of this chapter, draws on specific characters, scenes, and images from *Pilgrim's Progress* to dramatize the theological context the Fund operates within and the benefits Puritan texts, and Spurgeon's reports, provide.

First, in her 1887 reference to *Pilgrim's Progress* Spurgeon represents the nineteenth-century Dissenting theological context, particularly the liberal doctrine of New Theology, through Bunyan's language of pilgrimage. By drawing on Bunyan's imagery Spurgeon portrays liberal theology as "diverging" from the "right road" of Reformed scriptural truth; echoing Christian's journey "out of the way" and off the path of his pilgrimage (*TYA* 28, Bunyan 108). Furthermore, in this reference she draws on imagery from *Pilgrim's Progress* to illustrate her representation of and involvement in the theological debates of the Baptist Down-Grade Controversy. She relies on one particular scene in the allegory associated with immense spiritual "misery," the pilgrims' detour and incarceration in Doubting Castle, to illustrate the consequences of following the Dissenting liberal theology that Charles warns against in the Controversy (Bunyan 110). By paralleling New Theology to, arguably, the most significant and devastating diversion in Christian's pilgrimage, Spurgeon dramatizes the spiritual suffering and sin caused by this erroneous doctrine. The pilgrims' misery at the hands of the evil "surly" Giant Despair, to the point of contemplating death, is, therefore, reflective of the spiritual challenges and "despair" caused by straying from the Puritan, scriptural path (Bunyan 110). In this context

Spurgeon's representation of the Down-Grade is not merely a statement of support for Charles, but her own polemic against heretical doctrine, validated by the authority of Bunyan.

Second, by drawing on the instruction and direction provided to the pilgrims, particularly through the character of Evangelist, Spurgeon represents her reports and the work of the Fund as a guiding agent for Dissenters. She declares her Fund, echoing the work of Evangelist, operates as a "finger-post" directing and exhorting Baptist Dissenters in a time of doctrinal doubt and persecution (*TYA* 28). Here, she suggests it is not Charles's writing, but her own work that ensures ministers avoid spiritual incarceration in the "dungeon" of liberal doctrine (Bunyan 110). Furthermore, she portrays the distributed Puritan texts as directional aids, "pointing" ministers and readers along the "road," emphasizing yet another provision provided by Puritan books (*TYA* 28). The texts not only feed ministers, but they direct all "wayfaring" Dissenters, away from heresy and toward the "right" path of Puritan Reformed truth (28).

Third, by associating her work with the character of Evangelist, the ideal minister, Spurgeon signals that her own position, as both textual distributor and minister's wife, echoes the ministry of Evangelist. In Spurgeon's reports the books she distributes are represented as "ministering" agents (*TY* 391); however, her own writing also draws on the ministerial "exhortation[s]" of Evangelist (Bunyan 84). When he appears to the pilgrims he provides both warnings, "striv[e] against sin," and encouragement, "hold fast" (84). Though Spurgeon suggests her sermonic lessons are merely "meditation[s]" she, nevertheless, teaches, pleads, and preaches to her readers (*TYA* 351). Paralleling Evangelist's messages to the pilgrims she, too, warns her readers against heresy and sin and urges them to remain "steadfast in the old faith…!" (*TYA* 231). By drawing on Bunyan's language of pilgrimage and the pastoral teaching of Evangelist, I argue Spurgeon's writing, though represented as devotional, *performs* as

ministerial. Therefore, she signals that like the Puritan text, her Fund work and reports are invaluable "finger-posts" that direct, convict, and exhort Dissenting ministers and pilgrims. Her work also suggests Evangelist is a model for preaching men *and* ministering women who, like herself, "labour" and "minister[…] to the…saints" (*TY* 350).

Finally, Spurgeon's reliance on this particular scene from *Pilgrim's Progress* signals the necessity of the spiritual strength provided not only by Puritan ministers or texts, but also by Puritan women. Though the pilgrims manage to escape the Giant's "stinking Dungeon" (114) he remains a threat and reappears in the second part of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Here, however, the pilgrims fight "for their Lives" and valiantly bring the Giant "down to the Ground" (262). Spurgeon's readers, therefore, would link her reference of Doubting Castle to the scene of despair in part one, but also, to the scene of "deliverance" in part two (Bunyan 265). Deliverance that is, significantly, associated with the spiritual journey of the woman, Christiania, Christian's wife and the central character of the second part. Echoing the Giant's defeat, Spurgeon suggests her Fund also provides a heroic "counteract[ion]" against heretical "evil" (*TYA* 120). Thus, through the work of a Puritan woman "disciple[s] of…'The New Theology'" are "set free from [its] entanglements" (*TYA* 251). Here she signals that the minister's wife, and her ministry, carries a spiritual power all its own. Spurgeon's reliance on selective imagery from *Pilgrim's Progress*, therefore, allows her to suggest her Fund, her writing, and her ministry, is not merely pastoral charity, but a "needed" and "steadfast" "finger-post" providing guidance for the faith pilgrimage of all Dissenters (*TYA* 28).

II. "Doubt, and…divergence": Nineteenth-Century Dissenting Theological Context

Spurgeon's reference to *Pilgrim's Progress* appears within the opening paragraphs of her report for the year of 1887. Her introduction to a new year of reports typically reflects a

common pattern: calling to God for inspiration, "he alone" moves her "brain…and hand," and praising him for the progress and "prosperity" of the Fund work thus far (*TYA* 27). Following the introduction and recognition of blessings she records and comments on letters she has received from ministers, emphasizing the widespread "hunger" for books. As noted in previous chapters, Spurgeon consistently relies on language of sustenance to represent both ministerial poverty and the immediate necessity of the Fund's work. However, in the early paragraphs of her 1887 report she states the work of the Fund is not only "needed," but specifically "now more than ever" (28). This renewed necessity, she suggests, corresponds to the contemporary state of the Dissenting tradition and churches. She explains that the present "days," of late nineteenth-century Nonconformity, are defined not only by ministerial hunger, but also by "doubt, and deliberate divergence from the plain paths of the old Gospel" (28). Here, Spurgeon adopts a new analogy through which to further illustrate the context and necessity of her work and the spiritual benefit of Puritan texts. Shifting from imagery of sustenance to pilgrimage she portrays contemporary Dissenting faith as plagued by insecurity and questionable doctrine. Therefore, she implies Dissenting ministers, and her own readers, are at risk of straying from the "plain path" of biblical truth. A brief examination and reminder of the historical and theological setting of late nineteenth-century Nonconformity provides context to Spurgeon's two-part definition of contemporary Dissent: doubt and divergence.

a. "Days of doubt": Theological Scepticism

Given Spurgeon's commitment to Reformed theology and the Baptist tradition she declares the true and "plain" path for Dissenters is that of the "old Gospel" (*TYA* 28). Namely, the Puritan-inspired Calvinism and Scripturalism at the heart of evangelical Dissenting traditions, including Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists. As noted in chapter two, a number of late

nineteenth-century cultural and religious movements influenced "old" Dissenting doctrine. Doubts emerged regarding creation, Scripture, and doctrinal commitments. Therefore, many principles previously foundational to Dissenting theology, such as God's sovereignty, eternal suffering, and election, were challenged by theological liberalism. These three commitments were intertwined and at the heart of Calvinism. First, Calvinists held that God was sovereign, all powerful, and he decreed the fate of his creatures. Second, all humankind inherited sin and, therefore, deserved eternal punishment. Finally, Christ's sacrifice at the cross paid the price for sin, but only for those whom God has elected to eternal life. New approaches in science and theology, as well as romantic influences, encouraged Dissenters to question each of these doctrinal claims. For some, such claims began to seem "increasingly anachronistic as the nineteenth century progressed" (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 79). As historian Michael R. Watts notes, the nineteenth-century cultural and religious changes correlate to a divergence from the faith and doctrine that previously defined Dissenting life.

> As the industrial revolution revealed man's ability to control his environment, as the Romantic movement sought the divine in the world of nature, as diseases such as smallpox and cholera were conquered and the threat of sudden, unexpected death receded, so men increasingly looked to the improvement of their lot on this earth as the object of their ambition rather than seeking consolation in contemplating life after death (*Dissenters Vol. III* 79)

With a renewed focus on the present and a widespread "mood of religious uncertainty" the faith of many Reformed Dissenters was no longer anchored in scriptural truth (McLeod 181).[125] The historical circumstances suggest Spurgeon's Fund operates in a Dissenting context defined by

[125] For further details on the historical and theological changes within late nineteenth-century Dissent refer to chapter two, "Dissenting Liberalism and the Historical Context of Spurgeon's Fund."

theological change, and in turn, "days of doubt" (*TYA* 28). However, prior to establishing how her Fund will perform within and respond to the theological context, Spurgeon claims Dissenting theology is not only wavering, but is now "divergent from…the old Gospel" (28).

b. "Deliberate divergence": New Theology and Theological Liberalism

With her description of the present "days" as deviating from the "plain path," Spurgeon establishes pilgrimage as her overreaching analogy representative of the theological context and imagery through which she emphasizes the Fund's "needed" work. Her chosen phrase, "deliberate divergence," is significant for a number of reasons. First, it provides further details of the instability of Dissenting theology and, I suggest, it points to a narrower context, namely the specific theological challenges within Spurgeon's own Baptist tradition. Second, the phrase also links Spurgeon's portrayal of the context and work of her Fund directly to *Pilgrim's Progress*. Given the centrality of Bunyan's text within the Dissenting tradition Spurgeon's readers would likely associate "divergence from the path" with Christian's pilgrimage; a journey plagued by dangerous "diversions" from the Celestial City. By relying on this phrase, and later referring to one specific detour from the "way," Spurgeon associates contemporary theological liberalism with the doubt and spiritual suffering Christian experiences in the allegory. In doing so she establishes her own theological position, the Reformed truth of the "old" gospel, as the only route, or as she later suggests, "right road," for Dissenters to follow; the road the Fund points to and the path that leads Christian to eternal life.

Spurgeon's emphasis upon "divergence" corresponds to the late nineteenth-century doctrinal divide within evangelical Dissent.[126] As noted in chapter one, Dissenting ministers who re-interpreted their doctrine in light of liberal ideals embraced what they suggested was a "New

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[126] For a detailed study of the doctrinal division within Dissent see Watts's chapter "The Crisis of Dissent" in *Dissenters* vol. 3, pp 3-72.

Theology," also known as Broad Dissent, as opposed to orthodox Dissenters who remained committed to traditional, evangelical "old" Calvinist doctrine (Watts *Dissenters Vol. III* 20).[127] The doctrine of New Theology neglected the above mentioned Calvinistic, biblical teachings and emphasized a practical "worldly theology," focused on the present. Downplaying eternal suffering and election, New Theology preached a loving God who accepts all and proposed "science, not revelation, [as] the standard for truth" (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 82, Bush & Nettles 192). Liberal Dissenters considered their doctrine merely a "natural development of theology," (Bush & Nettles 192). However, for orthodox Dissenters, the changes represented not a modern adjustment, but a complete dismissal of God's truth: "the foundations of their faith were threatened" (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 20).

Within this context of doctrinal division Spurgeon clearly aligns herself with the orthodox theology of the "old gospel" (*TYA* 28). Therefore, like many orthodox Dissenters, she opposed liberal adaptations to Reformed theology. Through her pilgrimage analogy Spurgeon portrays New Theology as heretical doctrine in opposition to God's Word, the "Gospel." Furthermore, her direct association of the liberal theological context with imagery of "divergence" allows her to suggest New Theology is a deviation from Reformed orthodoxy, one that, as in Bunyan's narrative, leads to immense spiritual suffering. By shaping her representation of the present "days" into a path toward destruction Spurgeon's justification for her Fund's work performs as a dramatic warning against liberal theology. Her warning, however, is not only regarding the spread of New Theology throughout Dissent, but specifically the divisions it has spurred within Spurgeon's Baptist tradition.

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[127] See chapter one, "Autobiographical and Historical Context," for further discussion of New Theology and orthodox Dissent.

c. "Divergence from the plain paths": The Baptist Down-Grade Controversy

The wider textual frame of Spurgeon's reference to *Pilgrim's Progress* implies that her intended context, "these days," also refers to a theological conflict within the Baptist faith. Directly following her statement of the Fund's necessity Spurgeon declares the books she sends to ministers are not only "Puritanic," but they are "as free from the taint of 'modern thought' as the author of the articles on the 'Down-Grade' himself" (*TYA* 28). In her two volumes of reports this is her only direct reference to the "Down-Grade," the theological Controversy among Baptist theologians, led by Charles Spurgeon. In response to the liberalization of orthodox theology, within both his own church and amongst his fellow theologians, CH. Spurgeon published a series of doctrinal arguments in his periodical *The Sword and the Trowel.* His articles, beginning March of 1877, directly opposed the "new religion" of "modern thought" ("Another Word").[128] He claimed that churches who adopted the heretical doctrine of New Theology were denying the gospel and, therefore, "rapidly trending downward" ("Another Word"). A number of Baptist leaders responded with articles of their own, defending their re-interpretation of Scripture. The debates, referred to by CH. Spurgeon and historians as the "Down-Grade Controversy," continued in the press until his death in 1892. Susannah Spurgeon's reference to the Down-Grade signals that her portrayal of the theological pilgrimage and waywardness of Dissenters is a comment on, even participation in, this doctrinal debate. The details of the Controversy, outlined below, provide context to the following analysis of Spurgeon's representation of the Down-Grade, dramatized through Bunyan's imaginary realm of Doubting Castle.[129]

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[128] All referenced Down-Grade articles are from *The "Down Grade" Controversy*, compiled by Bob Ross, Pilgrim Publications, n.d. *The Spurgeon Archive*, web.archive.org/web/20140623204825/http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/dwngrd.htm.

[129] Here my focus is Spurgeon's portrayal of the Down-Grade and, as such, I provide only a brief outline of the Controversy. For further study of the historical context and details of the Down-Grade refer to Michael R. Watts's

In the late 1870s, as theological liberalism spread throughout Dissent, CH. Spurgeon became aware that one of his fellow Baptist ministers, Samuel Cox, was espousing doctrines of New Theology.[130] From the pulpit and his theological texts Cox rejected the idea of purgatory and suggested that all men and women could be saved and "rise into a large and happy spiritual kingdom" (quoted in Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 64). For CH. Spurgeon this was a clear rejection of scriptural teaching, eternal punishment, and Christ's sacrifice for the elect and, therefore, a denial of the pillars of Reformed theology. In 1878, writing in *The Sword and the Trowel*, CH. Spurgeon suggested Cox's writings were unsound and reflected the "sceptical tendencies of modern times" (cited in Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 63). Throughout the late 1870s into the 1880s CH. Spurgeon continued to subtly address concerns regarding fellow Baptist ministers and theologians who began to embrace and preach principles of New Theology. However, when he heard from a close friend, Samuel Booth- a Baptist minister and general secretary of the Baptist Union- that he was resigning due to the spread of New Theology in his church, CH. Spurgeon published a bold, direct opposition to liberal doctrine and warned Baptist leaders of the heretical views (Drummond 670).[131]

CH. Spurgeon published his first arguments against New Theology in March and April of 1887, initiating the Down-Grade Controversy. The two articles, titled "The Down Grade," were

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The Dissenters Vol III, Part 1, Sections 8, "The sceptical tendencies of modern times' (59-65), and 9, "The heresies of the Baptist Union" (66-71) as well as Lewis A. Drummond's *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, Kregel Publications, chapter 12 "I am One Whose Name Is Valiant-for-Truth: Spurgeon's Theology and the Gown Grade Controversy" 609-716. For primary material and articles published during the Down-Grade see *The Spurgeon Archive*, "Documents from the Downgrade Controversy," web.archive.org/web/20140623204825/http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/dwngrd.htm.

[130] Cox was pastor of the Mansfield Road General Baptist church in Nottingham.

[131] Samuel Harris Booth, minister at Elm Road Church, wrote to CH. Spurgeon and informed him that a fellow minister at his church, W.E. Bloomfield, was preaching against Baptist orthodox doctrine. He suggested Bloomfield embraced universalism, which held that all men would be saved, and rejected the doctrine of election (Drummond 670). Booth believed his church membership and leaders supported Bloomfield's claims so Booth resigned. He declared he was "against the attempt to bring into our churches what is known as the 'New Theology'"(cited in Drummond 670). CH. Spurgeon responded to Booth, suggesting he would support him and, without revealing names, he would publicly oppose New Theology as a heretical doctrine.

published in his periodical *The Sword and the Trowel* under the name of CH. Spurgeon's close friend and fellow Baptist minister, Robert Shindler. CH. Spurgeon collaborated with Schindler on the articles and published his own attached "Note." Given CH. Spurgeon's previous efforts to oppose liberal doctrines within his denomination went seemingly unnoticed he likely published under Schindler's name in an attempt to show he had support from a fellow minister.

The two articles provide a brief history of Dissenting theology, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. CH. Spurgeon and Schindler emphasize the firm historical commitment to Puritan Calvinist doctrine, as well as the numerous doctrinal divisions caused by heretical teachings. Beginning with seventeenth-century Dissent and the Act of Uniformity the authors note that the ministers who were "ejected" from the Church of England established churches that "were all Calvinistic in their faith, and such they remained for at least that generation" ("The Down Grade" March). However, they suggest that after "two or three generations" Dissenting ministers and churches "got on 'the down grade,'" away from "the great truths of the gospel" (March). Dissenters turned "from the old Puritan godliness of life, and the old Calvinistic form of doctrine" and began to embrace heretical teachings, including those of Arminianism, Antinomianism, Socinianism (March).[132] The authors are quick to note, however, that ministers who "retained their Calvinistic soundness and their purity of character and life…were zealous in their ministry" (April). Throughout the second article they continue to trace "the propagation of heresies" in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dissent. At the conclusion of both articles they signal that their portrayal of the theological waverings of Dissenting history is "a lesson for the present times, when…it is all too plainly apparent men are

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[132] As discussed in the previous chapter ("Spurgeon's Puritan Sources") many Puritan writers, including Brooks, Watson, and Gill, whom the Spurgeons admired, were involved in doctrinal debates, particularly in opposition to Antinomianism and Arminianism.

willing to forego the old for the sake of the new" (March). They avoid directly addressing the doctrines of New Theology, aside from denouncing the "tadpole of Darwinism," and repeatedly emphasize that nineteenth-century ministers and churches must hold "fast to the truth that the Holy Scriptures" and avoid the "wisp of modern thought" (April). However, the authors provide an implied warning against liberal doctrines that question biblical teachings: "there is great peril very near all those…who call in question the inspiration—the divine inspiration-of the Word of God" (April). CH. Spurgeon's and Schindler's overarching message urges nineteenth-century Dissenters to learn from the theological waywardness of their forefathers by rejecting "errors and mischiefs" of modern doctrine and clinging to "evangelical orthodoxy" (April). They conclude by declaring that "the great majority of those who are sound in…doctrine" are "more or less Calvinistic" while the rest, those on the down grade, "have wandered very seriously out of the right way" (April).

In both articles Shindler and CH. Spurgeon refrain from directly stating that contemporary Dissent is on the "down grade." Rather, they suggest churches are "in dangerous times," and at risk of repeating the "down grade" course of the past (April). However, in a note published alongside the second article (April 1887) CH. Spurgeon declares the readers of his periodical ought to pay "earnest attention" to their previous warning. For, he warns, Dissenting churches, and particularly Baptist ministers, "are going down hill at breakneck speed" ("Notes"). He advises them to return to "evangelical truths," of the old Puritan Dissenting faith and reminds them "Calvinism…helps to hold men to the vital truth" ("Notes"). CH. Spurgeon followed his note with a full article, "Another Word Concerning the Down-Grade." Here he suggests "the very existence of evangelical Nonconformity" was threatened in the past and now "many are returning to the poisoned cups which drugged that declining generation." In their first articles

Schindler and CH. Spurgeon vaguely implied churches were falling off course, but here CH. Spurgeon unabashedly declares his fellow ministers are "poisoned" and willfully "toying with" a "deadly cobra of 'another gospel,' in the form of 'modern thought'" ("Another Word"). He also addresses the doctrinal views of New Theology. He argues that in the teachings of this "new religion" the "Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth" ("Another Word"). Therefore, with the rejection of Calvinist principles he sarcastically concludes that "the inventions of 'modern thought'" are "no more Christianity than chalk is cheese" ("Another Word").

CH. Spurgeon's indictment of Baptist ministers was, unsurprisingly, followed by a number of responses from preachers and theologians published in *The Sword and the Trowel, The Baptist Times, British Weekly*, *Congregational Review* and other Dissenting papers. Although "both positive and negative responses to Spurgeon's Downgrade articles ensued," many of those close to CH. Spurgeon did not, in fact, support him (Bush and Nettles 248, Drummond 708).[133] Even ministers "whom [CH. Spurgeon] regarded as perfectly orthodox refused to follow him in his heresy hunt" (Watts *Dissenters Volume* III 66).[134] The Controversy reflects not only the battle between the "old gospel" of Calvinism and the liberal doctrine of New Theology, but also an immense conflict between CH. Spurgeon, the "colossus" of "the Baptist denomination," and his fellow Baptist churches (*Westminster Review* quoted in Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 61). Following his initial articles against modern theology CH. Spurgeon urged the

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[133] A number of popular Baptist ministers, such as John Clifford and E.G. Gange who trained at CH. Spurgeon's own Pastor's College, did not share his concerns.

[134] The president of the Baptist Union of churches, James Culross, did not support CH. Spurgeon. In his presidential address Culross suggested that "changing theological views were the enlargement rather than the decay of faith" (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 68).

English Baptist Union, the uniting body of Baptist Churches established in 1813, to stand against "the spirit of error" ("Progressive Theology"). He suggested they take "practical action" and establish a more detailed evangelical statement of doctrine ("Progressive Theology").[135] Such a declaration, he believed, would "rebuke" erroneous theology and "let the whole world know…that those who do not agree to the first principles of our faith will be intruders" ("Notes" Oct. 1888). The Union, reluctant to speak against the wide-spread modern doctrine and perhaps "embarrass[ed] to defend" their traditional views in light of contemporary challenges, refused to provide a revised creed (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 68). Determined the foundations of the Baptist faith were on the line, CH. Spurgeon, "the most famous and most popular Baptist…in the entire world," declared he and his church, the largest congregation of the century, would leave the Baptist Union (Larson 247, Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 61). After separating from the Union in October 1887 CH. Spurgeon continued, until his death in 1892, to publish articles and preach sermons against the "nonsense and blasphemy" of New Theology ("Notes" April 1888).[136]

III. "Despair" and "Doubting Castle": Spurgeon's Representation of the Down-Grade

As Charles's wife, Susannah Spurgeon was well aware of the details of the Down-Grade, from the outside, reading the papers, and from the inside, as Charles shared with her "the more

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[135] The Union had only a vague "old confession" and "repeatedly declined to draw up any new Confession or prescribe one" (McGlothlin).

[136] In his numerous Down-Grade articles, published over five years, CH. Spurgeon avoided directly accusing any of those in his denomination whom he believed were preaching the "error" of "modern thought" ("Notes" Feb. 1890). He wrote extensively against New Theology and harshly criticized his "company of esteemed friends" who embraced them, but he did not provide names ("Case Proved"). He also refrained from mentioning ministers and leaders who supported him. Historians suggest that CH. Spurgeon did not want to narrow the debate to "a personal war" (Macarthur). Given that his intention was, as he suggests, to warn against the dangers of "new theology, the theory of evolution, and the condemnation of all settled doctrine" avoiding names ensured his arguments, rather than the errors of particular men, took centre stage ("Notes" Dec. 1887). After his death CH. Spurgeon held continued influence in the Baptist denomination, though in the twenty years following the Controversy there was "an acceleration of the process of liberalization against which [CH.] Spurgeon had protested, and the beginnings of Nonconformist decline which he had foretold" (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 72).

personal and private aspects of the Controversy" (*Autobiography* 4.255).[137] In the *Autobiography* Spurgeon includes a chapter titled "The 'Down Grade' Controversy From Mr. Spurgeon's Standpoint." When discussing the Down-Grade CH. Spurgeon's biographers and religious scholars often refer to this chapter in addition to the articles in *The Sword and the Trowel.* The chapter includes a selection of letters from Charles, written to Susannah, the Baptist Union, and friends at the Tabernacle, that provide additional insight into the Controversy. Prior to the letters, the chapter begins with a selection of quotes from a variety of CH. Spurgeon's sermons. Some address his concerns regarding the emergence of "new doctrine," but many focus on the character of the minister in times of trial. CH. Spurgeon declares that no minister enjoys "attacking error," but he does so because as a "soldier [of Christ], he has learned to obey, and the rule of his obedience is not his personal comfort, but his Lord's absolute command" (4.251). A series of quotes then follow that present CH. Spurgeon as an exemplary minister, suffering for his faith. Despite being considered "a fool" by fellow Baptist preachers, CH. Spurgeon declares: "I stand to the truth" and as faith saved the great biblical martyrs from "poverty, and persecution, and martyrdom, and death" so to "will [it] save me" (4.254). Through her selection and arrangement of the quotes Spurgeon represents the Down-Grade as an erroneous doctrine "with evil effects" and Charles as a lone suffering servant fighting an admirable "battle" for the "old theology" of Calvinism (4.254). In her own brief discussion of the Down-Grade in the *Autobiography* Spurgeon describes the Controversy as the "most sorrowful…episode" of her husband's "noble life" (4.254, 255).[138] Her depiction of the Down-Grade is, of course, shaped by

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[137] Spurgeon notes that "from August, 1887, to February, 1892, scarcely any number of the magazine [*The Sword and the Trowel*] appeared without some reference to the Controversy and its various issues" (4.255).
[138] The Controversy had a profound effect on Charles Spurgeon's life and ministry. A number of his biographers suggest the Down-Grade "brought on his fatal illness" and contributed to his early death at 57 (Watts *Dissenters Volume III* 74). Likewise, in the *Autobiography* Susannah Spurgeon claims the Down-Grade was Charles's "deepest grief" and "his fight for the faith had cost him his life" (4.255).

the context; it is presented within a text dedicated to praising the life and ministry of Charles. In her Book Fund reports, however, the doctrines of New Theology are not merely an episode in her husband's life, but rather an allegorical "Giant" threatening the faith of all Dissenting ministers and pilgrims.

a. "Now…in these days": Spurgeon's Participation in the Down-Grade

The Down-Grade significantly shaped CH. Spurgeon's ministry and contemporary biographies of his life, yet the Controversy is rarely mentioned by Susannah Spurgeon. Though the Book Fund was initiated to distribute CH. Spurgeon's texts, Spurgeon's reports further emphasize the separation of her work from his life. Scholars have been quick to portray the Fund primarily as a reflection of Spurgeon's support for and dedication to her husband, even referencing it as "The Pastor's Book Fund" (Theobald 152). However, aside from brief discussions of CH. Spurgeon's distributed titles, her reports do not focus on his life.[139] Spurgeon references the Down-Grade directly on only one occasion, the epigraph of this chapter, in the first annual report following the Controversy. This reference, therefore, establishes her primary representation of the Down-Grade, a "divergence" from truth," and the significant role her Fund plays within it, "pointing wayfarers to the right road" (*TYA* 28).

The publication and distribution of the Fund reports sheds light on the significance and readership of this 1887 report, particularly regarding Spurgeon's portrayal of and involvement in the Controversy.[140] This report was first published annually, available in early 1888, immediately following the first year of the Down-Grade Controversy. As noted in chapter one, Spurgeon records her reports were widely distributed, "found great favour, stirred much interest, and

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[139] Occasionally Spurgeon references aspects of their life together, such as entertaining guests and travelling. She mentions Charles frequently in the report written after the year of his death, though the emphasis is not his life, but her grief.

[140] Refer to chapter one for further details of the publication of Spurgeon's reports.

brought large increase to the Fund" (*TY* 245). She includes many letters that suggest the reports were sent to subscribers of the Fund as well as to ministers and missionaries who received Fund books, many of whom circulated the reports. The reports were also advertised to readers across the globe, in the popular collected volumes of CH. Spurgeon's sermons published worldwide. Spurgeon notes, significantly, that the reports are not only sent across the world, but also along with copies of *The Sword and Trowel,* the periodical in which CH. Spurgeon published his articles during the Down-Grade. Since the first reports of the Fund were also published in *The Sword and Trowel* many of the readers of the periodical likely continued to follow Spurgeon's work and subscribe to the Fund. Even after her reports were published independently Spurgeon often provided short Fund updates in the "Notes" of the periodical. Thus, the Fund reports were not only widely distributed, but, significantly, they shared the distribution networks and readership of the Down-Grade articles.

By early 1888 Dissenting readers, of both the reports and periodical, would have received Spurgeon's 1887 report and her commentary on, even indictment of, contemporary "divergent" theology. This report emerges at the height of the Down-Grade, published only months after CH. Spurgeon's dramatic exit from the Baptist Union. As such, Spurgeon's portrayal of Dissenting doctrine and "modern thought" could be read in tandem with the Down-Grade articles, published in *The Sword and the Trowel* beginning March 1887. This 1887 report, therefore, is not only a commentary on the Down-Grade, but also, given the shared readership, may be considered Spurgeon's own contribution to and participation in the Controversy; a Puritan woman's doctrinal observations published alongside theological arguments of Dissenting liberal and orthodox ministers. Significantly, Spurgeon's reference to the Down-Grade in this report is not a supportive statement for Charles. Rather, it performs as her own representation of

the Controversy; a heretical portrayal of New Theology dramatized through Bunyan's scene of imprisonment and torture. She also implies her Fund plays a significant, necessary role in the Controversy: "pointing wayfarers," as Evangelist guides the pilgrims, "to the right road" (*TYA* 28). Signalling to Dissenting readers that they ought to not only support Charles, but also the work of the Fund, in this perilous theological context.

Though Spurgeon's report may be considered as part of the Down-Grade dialogue, it is not merely another Dissenting voice in the Controversy. Her work is representative of the Dissenting woman's contribution; she is the only woman and minister's wife to publish on the Down-Grade. The articles of the Controversy are written by CH. Spurgeon and fellow Dissenting preachers, those who held traditional positions of theological authority within Nonconformity. In nineteenth-century evangelical Dissent women did not hold positions of leadership and "were not permitted to engage in theology in its formal sense" (Styler 12). Therefore, as noted in chapter three, "more formal doctrinal argument…as expressed in the sermon, treatise or essay, were deemed beyond the capacity of the female mind and…provenance" (Styler 14). Nineteenth-century women commented on religious topics, but primarily through "acceptable" genres. Such genres included fiction, poetry, advice literature, and practical divinity, namely, devotional writing and hymns. As I argue throughout this chapter, Spurgeon presents her theological writing in her reports within the genre of devotional "meditations"; yet her work, nevertheless, *performs* as ministerial, doctrinal writing (*TYA* 351). Portions of her reports also echo the form and content of theological arguments, sermons, and the exhortations of Evangelist, the ideal minister. Her writing, therefore, suggests ministerial wives may contribute not only to their husband's ministry, but to the ministry, and theology, of the saints. At times in her reports Spurgeon also presents select ecclesiastical arguments (petitioning

for ministerial compensation or criticizing church leadership) with little apology or devotional frame. In these instances she is reliant only on the guise of Fund reporting, a seemingly "genderless" genre.[141] Generically, her reports are comparable to charitable or missionary accounts, commonly written by both men and women in the nineteenth century. This fluid genre, coupled with her theological training, allows Spurgeon some freedom to extend the established boundaries of the ministerial wife's work and writing.

Although Spurgeon's commentary on the Down-Grade is not presented as theological discourse and is somewhat hidden within her 1887 report, it is, nevertheless, a doctrinal argument. One that also shares the distribution and readership of formal theological articles. Furthermore, it provides another example of how Spurgeon negotiates the limitations of her position. In this report she turns not to apology or practical piety, but to the authority of Bunyan. Drawing on established imagery of spiritual divergence in *Pilgrim's Progress* she validates her representation of contemporary theology and, as I suggest in the chapter conclusion, her spiritual authority. Her report, therefore, not only provides further insight into the Controversy, but also contributes to our understanding of how nineteenth-century women, particularly ministers' wives, circumnavigated, or even challenged, the boundaries of theological writing.

b. "Shut up in Doubting Castle": Spurgeon's Portrayal of New Theology

Having established that her Fund and Puritan texts are "free from the taint of 'modern thought'" Spurgeon continues, in this 1887 report, to elaborate on the doctrinal "lies" her readers ought to "fear" (*TYA* 28). Unlike Charles, she does not provide an outline or critique of the

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[141] Styler argues that nineteenth-century genres, particularly within religious writing, "were, to a high degree, 'gendered' according to the intellectual and spiritual capacities that they covertly claimed" (13). Therefore, "argument, originality of concept and authority in voice were male prerogatives" that draw on "broad learning, original thought, and spiritual authority," all of which were considered "difficult for women to assume" (Styler 13). While non-fiction prose and theological discourse were reserved for men, the "feminine" genres, such as fiction, poetry, and practical divinity, drew on domestic and emotional experience, in accordance with essentialist estimates of female nature (Styler 13).

theological tenets of New Theology. Rather, I argue she turns to Bunyan's allegory to shape an argument against liberal theology. By drawing on two particular scenes in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the pilgrims' turn from God's "way" and imprisonment in Doubting Castle, Spurgeon relies on an established Dissenting representation of spiritual divergence and despair to dramatize "modern thought" as a heretical "giant"; a divergence from the gospel with grave spiritual consequences.

i. "Modern Thought" as "Divergence"

First, by framing the nineteenth-century theological context as "deliberate divergence" Spurgeon firmly links her portrayal of contemporary liberal theology to the pilgrims' digression from the road of faith. In her brief reference to *Pilgrim's Progress* Spurgeon depicts "modern thought" as a menacing heresy with damning spiritual effects. She declares: the "wayfarers" who deliberately "diverge…from the plain paths of the old Gospel" and, in turn, embrace the teachings of "modern thought" ought to "fear being belated in the grounds of Giant Despair" (*TYA* 28). To further signal her reference to one particular scene in Bunyan's text and to illustrate the spiritual consequences associated with the doctrine she confirms that its followers will be firmly "shut up in Doubting Castle" (*TYA* 28). Although Spurgeon specifically mentions the Castle I suggest she also has in mind the wider context of this scene. Prior to this reference Spurgeon notes that it is "deliberate divergence" that leads to the grounds of Giant Despair. This implies that in her representation of contemporary theological doubt and heresy, particularly New Theology, she draws not only on the scene of Giant Despair, but the events leading up to it, namely the pilgrims' divergence from "the way" (Bunyan 198).

In *Pilgrim's Progress* the scene prior to the Castle reveals *why* the characters, Christian, the pilgrim, and Hopeful, his "Companion" at this point in his journey, are imprisoned by the

Giant (97). According to the text the path of Christian's pilgrimage, representative of the journey of faith and process of conversion, had become particularly "rough" (108).[142] The pilgrims' feet were "tender" and they "wished for a better way" (108). At the beginning of his journey Christian is firmly instructed, by his guide Evangelist, to stay on the path and travel "directly" to the "Wicket-gate," the entrance of the Celestial City and his final destination (11). Christian's pilgrimage is considered representative of Bunyan's Protestant commitment to one singular path to heaven, through conversion and Christ. Therefore, the narrator emphasizes throughout the text that Christian must never stray from "the way."[143] Throughout his journey he is often tempted to diverge from "the way" by false promises and temptations (such as the Hill of Difficulty and the promise of treasure at Lucre Hill). Yet, aside from a brief turn off the path he remains steadfast.[144] Here, however, when the pilgrimage becomes particularly rough Christian suggests they turn "left" off the road and travel through By-Path-Meadow for it seems to be "the easiest going" (108). Despite previous warnings he and Hopeful turn off "the way." As they travel they meet another pilgrim who also ventured out of the way, Vain-confidence, described in Bunyan's margin notes as a "stranger[]" (108). He falsely confirms that the diverted path leads to the Celestial Gate. Suddenly he falls "into a deep pit" and is "dashed to pieces"; his fate symbolic of the consequences of straying (108). The pilgrims quickly regret their choice and rain starts to flood their path, nearly drowning them. They are instructed by a voice to return to

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[142] More specifically, the pilgrimage is reflective of the seventeenth-century Protestant, Puritan process of conversion. Christian's experiences throughout the narrative are considered a depiction of the "defined steps" of conversion (Owens xxvii). Beginning with the *calling*, the Holy Spirit drawing the sinner to repentance, leading to *justification* and forgiveness through Christ, then *sanctification*, perseverance and struggling against sin to lead a holy life, and finally *glorification* (the Celestial City), eternal life in heaven (Owens xxvii).
[143] Pilgrims who turn from "the way" and trust in hypocrites, morality, or "'head' knowledge'" will not reach the Celestial City (Owens xxviii).
[144] Christian is persuaded by Worldly Wiseman to "turn[] out of his way"(23). Worldly Wiseman suggests another way, the village of Morality, will be easier (18). Christian is then reprimanded by Evangelist and instructed to "abhor" turning "out of the way" (23).

the "High-way" but it is too "dangerous" so they seek shelter (109). Unfortunately, the place "where they lay" is within the grounds of Doubting-Castle, owned by the "grim and surly" Giant Despair (109). The Giant captures the pilgrims and forces them into his Dungeon where they are kept and tortured for four days.

In the narrative this scene is portrayed as an intentional turn "out of the way" inspired by Christian's own desires, human reasoning, and the false teaching of a "stranger[]" (108). Nineteenth-century scholars further suggest the pilgrims' departure from the "way" is not a minor detour but, rather a "deliberate quit[ting] [of the] the plain path" (Scott 221). Therefore, it is comparable to "wilful sin"; a rejection of God's calling and instruction (Scott 221). Drawing on this purposeful divergence Spurgeon implies "modern thought" is a deliberate sin against God, similarly inspired by both human reasoning and false teaching. In doing so she signals the doctrine is not merely a revision of "old" Puritan beliefs, but a faithless, sinful rejection of divine truth.

First, by portraying "modern thought" as "deliberate divergence" Spurgeon signals that like the pilgrims, the disciples of New Theology have turned off the "right road" by relying on their own reasoning. When the pilgrims become discouraged by the difficulty of their travels they begin to wish for and seek an "easie[r]" way (109). In doing so Christian turns not to prayer or godly guidance, such as the words Evangelist, but to his own observations and judgement. He relies on what he sees ("behold [the other] Path") and determines for himself ("here is the easiest going") and makes a decision based on his own desires ("Tis' according to my wish") (108). Thus, Christian depends only on "the way which recommends itself to the senses ('look') and his reason" (Fish 284). Likewise, in her reports Spurgeon signals that liberal theology is particularly "divergent" from the gospel because it is reliant on human, earthly knowledge and "tamper[s]"

with God's truth (*TYA* 77). She emphasizes that those who have "turned aside from 'the old paths'" are relying on "polluted waters drawn from *earthly* sources" rather than "blessed wells of salvation which the Lord Himself has opened" (*TYA* 245; italics added). The shift toward human reason is also evident in the doctrine of New Theology which "reinterpret[s] the Christian message in the light of advances in knowledge" (Watts 66 *Dissenters III*). Furthermore, with the rejection of eternal punishment and the atonement the doctrine relies on human morality, rather than God's standards or faith in the divine. As CH. Spurgeon argues, New Theology is a reflection of "the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age" ("A Sermon").

Second, returning to the allegory, the divergence of the pilgrims is also linked to poor guidance or false teaching. When Christian and Hopeful turn off the way they soon "espied a Man" known as Vain-confidence. The name implies confidence in self, rather than the divine. He falsely suggests that the road "out of the way" will still lead to the Celestial city. Here Bunyan's margin notes warn the reader not to "fall in with strangers" (108). The margin also points to Isaiah 9:16, a reference to Israel's turn from God ("the people turneth not unto him") to false prophets who "teacheth lies" and "cause them to err" (9:15-17). Vain-confidence is, therefore, representative of false teachers, strangers of God, and "worldly men" who are "sad guide[s]" (Cheever 310).

Spurgeon's readers would not only be familiar with this scene, but also with the associated scriptural warning against deceptive teaching. By drawing on this particular scene Spurgeon signals that "divergence" is also caused by false preachers of contemporary theology, the "modern thought men" who echo Vain-confidence (*Autobiography* 4.255). In this same 1887 report, directly following her reference to *Pilgrim's Progress,* Spurgeon confirms the "strangers" she has in mind are the teachers of "modern thought." Namely, men who she sarcastically refers

to as the "so-called 'cultured' preachers of the present day" (*TYA* 29). Later in her reports she suggests these modern preachers rely on the tactics of Vain-confidence and "draw[] away" and "entice[]" believers from the godly way (*TYA* 120). She signals that their final destination will, therefore, echo that of Bunyan's "stranger." Not long after meeting Christian and Hopeful Vain-confidence falls "into a deep Pit…and [is] dashed to pieces" (108). Spurgeon likewise declares that the "so-called" preachers will be "winnowed" and "purged" by God (*TYA* 29).[145]

Third, by referencing a "deliberate" turn from "path of the…Gospel" Spurgeon draws on the pilgrims' wilful transgression to portray "modern thought" as purposeful sin against God. In Bunyan's text the pilgrims' intentional departure off the path is represented as a rejection of "the way" of God and as a wilful sin punishable by imprisonment. Prior to this scene Christian was convinced by the false promises of Mr. Legality to "turn[…] out of the way" (23). When he digressed he was threatened by a dangerous fiery "high Hill" and Evangelist immediately appeared to chastise him for "turning thee from the way in which I had set thee" (24). He declares to Christian that "turning…out of the way" is "to reject the counsel of God," and to "forsake the right way" (23). Thus, he has committed a "sin [that] is very great" (23, 25). At Doubting Castle Christian's divergence is, therefore, a "great" sin, one he was previously warned against, and a "wilful transgression" caused by his own desire; he "*chose* to go out of it" (Scott 222, Bunyan 118; italics added). Consequently, the punishment for Christian's intentional sin is not merely a warning from Evangelist, but a severe four day imprisonment.

By emphasizing the "deliberate" divergence of "modern thought" Spurgeon likewise suggests embracing the doctrine is an intentional forsaking of God's gospel, a wilful

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[145] Here Spurgeon alludes to Luke 3:16-17, John the Baptist's description of Christ's coming judgement: "he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." Representative of Christ's discernment between the "righteous," the wheat, and the wicked," the chaff (Malachi 3:18).

transgression. Furthermore, she signals this divergence as not only a sinful turn from God, but idolatry against him. Immediately following her observation of the "divergence" of New Theology Spurgeon describes "modern thought" as 'these 'new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not' (*TYA* 28). Her reference is to Deuteronomy 32:17: "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." Notably, the context of the passage is God's anger and jealousy toward Israel for their "abominations" with "strange gods" (32:16). They committed idolatry by not only turning from God, but to *new* gods. Thus, they "were no gods at all, but mere counterfeits and pretenders," so far from God as to be considered "devils" (Henry Deut. 32:15-18). Here, Spurgeon's portrayal of "modern thought" as "divergence" to "new gods" is not a subtle warning or veiled criticism. Rather, her reference boldly links liberal theology to the deliberate worship of idols; the abomination of bowing to devils.[146]

Spurgeon's damning portrayal of liberal doctrine extends beyond mere support of her husband's position in the Controversy. Relying on Bunyan's representation of divergence from "the way," she shapes an audacious polemic against "modern thought" for her own purpose. By warning her readers and opponents of the "old gospel" that New Theology is not simply revised doctrine, but "a very great sin" she establishes "modern thought" as a dangerous heresy, comparable to idolatry. In doing so she signals that her own work is imminently necessary to prevent wayfarers from deliberately seeking "gods whom they knew not" and to guide pilgrims toward "the right path."

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[146] Later in her reports Spurgeon further associates liberal theology with the worship of idols, declaring "new theology" is that which was" hated of (our) David's soul" (*TYA* 245). She draws on 2 Samuel 5:8: "And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain." Many commentators, including John Gill, whom Spurgeon admired, read "the lame and the blind" as a reference to "idols and images," those who have eyes but cannot see (Gill "Samuel" 547). In this context the verse implies that "nothing [is] more abominable to David than idolatry" (Gill "Samuel" 547).

ii. "Modern Thought" as "Despair"

Having established "modern thought" as a transgression against God, Spurgeon draws on the scene of Doubting Castle to illustrate the consequence of such wilful sin. In her report Spurgeon does not elaborate on the pilgrims' experience in the Castle, merely suggesting it is a place to be feared. She need not say more for her Dissenting readers would immediately recognize "Despair" as not merely spiritual gloom, but a "grim and surly" Giant who "beats" pilgrims "fearfully" (Bunyan 110). Likewise, for a nineteenth-century audience Doubting Castle conjures not merely scepticism but imagery of immense spiritual suffering associated with the pilgrims' near starvation in the Giant's "stinking," "very dark Dungeon" (110). Through this reference, arguably, one of the most vivid and familiar representations of "spiritual hopelessness" available to the Dissenting reader, Spurgeon dramatizes the spiritual consequences of New Theology (Davies 282). She, therefore, implies those who give in to the temptation of "modern thought" have, like the pilgrims, trespassed into the grounds of the Giant and will suffer spiritual anguish.

In the allegory the pilgrims are "forced" by the Giant into his "very dark Dungeon" (110). For four days they are imprisoned without food or drink while the Giant "beats them fearlessly" and threatens to "[tear] them in pieces" (110, 114). Christian is in such despair that he considers whether it is best for them "to die out of hand" and take the Giant's advice to make "an end of themselves" (111,110). The pilgrims' imprisonment and torture has inspired many readings. However, the scene is consistently interpreted as a reflection of "the fear and brutality" the pilgrims experience as a result of their lack of faith and guilt for leaving "the way" (Davies 282). The severity of their suffering is extraordinary; physical and spiritual torment until "they could do little but breath" (113). Despite Christian's numerous challenges, battles, and hardships his

imprisonment at Despair is portrayed as "worse than all the fatigue and trials of [his] pilgrimage" (Wythe 120, 1894). It is not only physical hardship, surpassing that of his battle with "the Monster" Apollyon, but also the most intense "spiritual danger in Christian's journey" (Sharrock 118).[147] The pilgrims' emotional despair is often paralleled to Bunyan's consuming, even violent, "spiritual malaise" in *Grace Abounding* (Sharrock 118-119). The pilgrims' spiritual suffering in the Castle is reflected in the prevailing darkness of the scene. A darkness that signals both physical isolation and spiritual darkness; a lack of God's presence. The Dungeon is repeatedly described as "very dark…to the spirit" and "without one bit of…light" (110). The pilgrims "continued together (in the dark)" and they "mourn[ed] without the light" (112, 113). In the Castle the pilgrims have lost sight of the light of salvation, the "shining light" Evangelist instructed Christian to keep in his eye. Thus, the darkness reflects not only their sense of sin and damnation, but also "literally being cut off from the light of God" (Alpaugh 303).

Spurgeon's reliance on this particular scene, in the context of the Down-Grade, directly links New Theology to a series of violent, graphic images: a "stinking" Dungeon, a "grim," ruthless Giant "tear[ing]" pilgrims "in pieces," and prisoners "sore with…stripes" contemplating "strangling rather than life" (110-113). Leaving little room for doubt Spurgeon declares that those who follow "modern thought" ought to "fear" such despair. Although the comparison associates the doctrine with a variety of threatening images, Spurgeon relies on a set of key phrases to illustrate the spiritual consequences of embracing "new gods." She suggests wayfaring pilgrims ought to fear the punishment of Giant Despair, but especially "being belated" and "shut-up" in Doubting Castle (*TYA* 28). Notably, the term "belated" carries two meanings.

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[147] When battling with Apollyon Christian "never dreamed of destroying himself" (Cheever 259). However, his despair in the Castle reflects his "sense of sin and of God's wrath in account of it…none can stand against God's terrors" (Cheever 259).

It may be defined as "to make late" or "delay," suggesting the pilgrim's imprisonment hinders their progress ("Belate"). However, the term may also imply a sense of darkness related to the notion of being "overtaken by lateness of the night" and "overtaken by darkness, benighted" ("Belated"). Moreover, "benighted" connotes not only darkness of the night, but also "intellectual or moral darkness" ("Benighted"). In this context, Spurgeon implies the Castle of "modern thought" will delay the spiritual progress of wayward Dissenters and, drawing on Bunyan's imagery of "dark[ness] to the spirit," she suggests it will cause overwhelming darkness, of both mind and soul. Darkness associated with sin, despair, and isolation from the light of God. Furthermore, her warning that followers of New Theology may be "shut up" in Doubting Castle implies both a sense of confinement and darkness. They are closed in, sealed off from the light, their only guide and salvation.

Despite their weakness and despair Bunyan's pilgrims manage to escape the den of the Giant by returning to God and praying "till almost the break of day" (114). Christian then realizes he has a Key in his "bosom, called *Promise*" that will unlock any gate in Doubting Castle (114). Once they are free Hopeful and Christian set up a "Pillar" to warn "those that followed after" of the "danger" of travelling "out of the way" and into the grounds of Despair (115). By strategically referencing *Pilgrim's Progress* at the height of the Down-Grade, Spurgeon's report, likewise, performs as a cautionary "pillar." One through which she urges Dissenting wayfarers to avoid the "danger" of turning from "the old Gospel" and into the grounds of idolatry. For, she suggests, the "new" gods "taint" Puritanic theology and like the surly Giant they threaten the spiritual well-being of all pilgrims. She, therefore, urges readers to heed not only her advice, but the warning of their revered Puritan guide, John Bunyan. By relying on Bunyan's allegorical exhortation against turning "out of the way" Spurgeon validates

her representation of "modern thought" as heretical "divergence" from God's truth. In doing so she associates New Theology with established Dissenting imagery of worldliness, false teaching, sin, and spiritual suffering. Thus, Spurgeon's report performs as a doctrinal argument against liberal theology and her own contribution to the Down-Grade Controversy.

IV. "*This* finger-post": The Guidance of the Book Fund and Puritan Texts

By relying on *Pilgrim's Progress* Spurgeon not only shapes her 1887 report into a pillar of warning, but also a "finger-post" of direction (*TYA* 28). Having established the eminent danger of wandering from "the plain paths" of the Puritan gospel Spurgeon proclaims that the "work" and guidance of the Fund is "needed" "now more than ever" (28). She represents this work, the distribution of Puritan texts, as mirroring the counsel of Evangelist and "pointing" Dissenting pilgrims to" the right road" (28). More specifically, the Fund's texts echo the two-part guidance Evangelist provides to Christian. First, the texts provide spiritual instruction to ministers, much like the "Parchment-Roll" Evangelist gives to Christian. Second, the books "point" ministers to the Scriptures, echoing Evangelist's "pointing" to the "shining light" of the Word (Bunyan 11). By drawing on the character of Evangelist Spurgeon parallels her work and the agency of the Puritan text to the central figure of guidance in the Dissenting literary tradition. Moreover, her reliance on Bunyan's authority and imagery further validates the necessity of her Fund and establishes Puritan theology as the only "right" path to the Gospel.

At the beginning of Christian's pilgrimage the first instruction he receives is from "a man named Evangelist" (11). Upon meeting him the pilgrim cries out that he does not "know whither to go" or what he "shall do to be saved" (11). According to "the Book in [his] hand he is condemned to die, but he is "not willing" (11). Evangelist encourages Christian to take action ("why standest thou still?" (11)) and provides guidance through two means. First, he gives

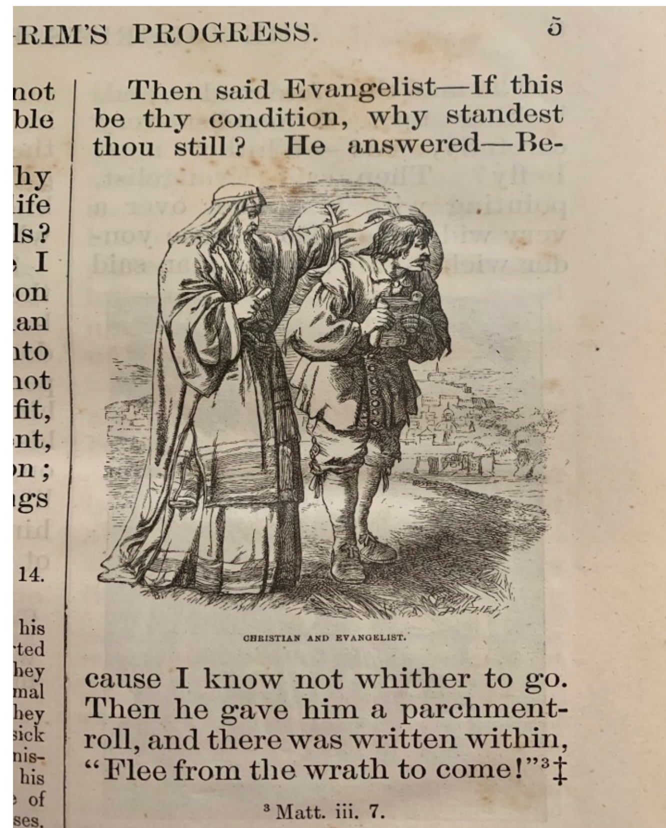
Christian a "Parchment-Roll" that instructs him to "fly from the wrath to come" (11). Second, he guides the pilgrim by "pointing with his finger" toward the Wicket-Gate and the "yonder shining light" (11). He instructs Christian to "keep the light in [his] eye" and go "directly thereto" for it leads to the Wicket-gate, representative of the beginning of his conversion experience (11-12, Owens 293).

Spurgeon's reference to the "finger-post" guidance of the Fund corresponds to the textual direction that Evangelist gives to Christian. The writing on the parchment roll refers to Matthew 3:7, the words of John the Baptist proclaiming the coming of Christ and impending judgement. Speaking to the crowds he declares that God "hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come." Christian's book, commonly interpreted as the Bible, warns him of the coming judgment and the roll "urges him to go…to seek faith and salvation" (Aukeman 70). Therefore, the parchment is not the Bible itself. Rather, it is one of many written documents and rolls in the narrative, such as Christian's "roll with a Seal" and Christiana's "Letter" from "thy Husbands King," that carry spiritual instruction (37, 171). Isabel Hofmeyr refers to these documents as "literate objects" that carry "spiritual authority" ("Dreams" 445, 447). Although they may change form or seem ambiguous she suggests they are "tokens of spiritual power," even "passports to heaven," for they direct pilgrims and lead them to the Celestial City. Likewise, as Spurgeon signals throughout her reports, Puritan texts are not only preaching material, but they carry "God-given power" and authority (*TYA* 23). Therefore, like the roll, they have the capacity to guide "seeking souls" and "perishing sinner[s]" to heaven, the "fountain of life" (*TYA* 23). Echoing the judgment of the scroll, Puritan texts also have "power…over human hearts" and are capable of "conviction," warning pilgrims of the wrath to come (*TY* 314, *TYA* 73, 72). Spurgeon's readers would not only be familiar with the parchment roll and written documents in the allegory, but

also with the spiritual power and agency attributed to them. Therefore, by portraying her Fund texts as embodying a divine authority she further elevates the imperative value of the Puritan book. The texts are as necessary for Dissenting readers' faith as the roll is to Christian's pilgrimage.

Following the instruction of the parchment roll Evangelist directs Christian by "pointing his finger" toward the wicket gate and shining light. Here, "Evangelist acts as a finger-post, directing the way, and helping the power of the Pilgrim's eye-sight" (Maguire 7). Spurgeon draws on this specific act of guidance when she declares her Book Fund is a "finger-post…pointing wayfarers to the right road" (*TYA* 28). In the following sentence she explains how the Fund "points": by distributing "solid, old-fashioned, Scriptural, Puritanic theology alone" (28). Throughout her reports she emphasizes that these texts guide, direct, and "point" ministers to the truth though "divine instruction" (*TY* 221). She suggests the books "carry, hidden within their pages, a mine of spiritual help" and thus they perform "the work" of "guiding, and refreshing [ministers] in all parts of the world" (*TYA* 116). The texts also, like Evangelist, point directly to the "shining light." Bunyan's margin notes explain that the "yonder…light" Evangelist urges Christian to follow is "the Word" (13). The notes refer specifically to the biblical description of the Scriptures as "light that shineth in a dark place" and "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (2 Peter 1:19, Ps. 119:105). By paralleling this act of guidance from Evangelist Spurgeon further reminds her readers that Puritan texts point to the Bible; they are "scriptural" and direct ministers to "the grand truths of the living Word" (*TYA* 28,174). Thus, in days of doubt and darkness, "without one bit of…light," Puritan books are

especial needed to lead pilgrims to the light of the Word (Bunyan 112). Immediately following her portrayal of the darkness caused by New Theology Spurgeon reminds her readers that "the


RIM'S PROGRESS. 5

Then said Evangelist—If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? He answered—Be-

CHRISTIAN AND EVANGELIST.

cause I know not whither to go. Then he gave him a parchment-roll, and there was written within, "Flee from the wrath to come!"[3]‡

[3] Matt. iii. 7.

Evangelist "pointing with his finger." Circa 1860 illustrated edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Source: Author's Library

books that go[…] forth" from the Book Fund "enlighten [ministers'] "mind[s]" (*TYA* 28). Therefore, scriptural Puritan books not only point to the light but also provide "needed illumination" and "lighten a little of the darkness" (*TY* 221, 48).

V. "Ministering to…the saints": Spurgeon's Sermonic Echo of Evangelist

In her portrayal of the Fund as a "finger-post" Spurgeon draws on the warning and guidance of Evangelist to suggest her work and the Puritan text are both necessary agents of direction for Dissenting pilgrims. In doing so she also signals that her own position, as both minister's wife and textual distributor, echoes that of Evangelist. Although there are varied

interpretations of the character it is often assumed Evangelist "represents a minister of the gospel" (Owens 293).[148] He appears to Christian throughout his pilgrimage to provide guidance, instruction, encouragement, and sometimes correction, much like a pastor ministers to his flock. Following his meeting with Christian at the beginning of his pilgrimage Evangelist first re-appears when Christian briefly "turns from the way" by following Worldly Wiseman's temptation. Evangelist rebukes him for turning "from the way in which I had set thee" (24) and reminds him to "utterly abhor" the false "doctrine of this world" (23). He meets with Christian again later in his journey to uplift him after a time of trial. Here, Bunyan's margin notes explain that Evangelist provides Christian and his companion, Faithful, with an "exhortation," similar to a sermonic warning or encouragement (84). He declares that they must continue to "hold fast," remain faithful, resist "the Devil," and "striv[e] against sin" (84). Thus, as an "able and faithful minister" Evangelist sets Christian on the path of faith and urges him not to stray from "the way that is good" (Scott 165, Bunyan 25).

In her reports Spurgeon represents the distributed Puritan texts as embodying a "ministering" agency comparable to Evangelist (*TY* 391). The books encourage ministers by "build[ing] [them] up in [their] most holy faith" and guide them through "divine instruction" (*TYA* 28, *TY* 221). When Evangelist visits Christian after a trying time the pilgrim is relieved to see his "good friend" (83). He describes Evangelist as one who guided him, "set [him] the way," and he asks him for spiritual "help" for "the rest of [his] way" (84). Likewise, Spurgeon suggests she sends ministers "books which shall be life-long friends" that "help" them by providing "succour and support" (*TY* 250, *TY* 391). The texts not only provide "help in pulpit

[148] A selection of scholars suggest that Evangelist represents one particular minister, John Gifford, a parish minister of Bedford who guided Bunyan's early spiritual life (Owens 293, Maguire 11, Whyte 11-18).

preparation" but, echoing Evangelist's encouragement to the pilgrims, they also provide "refreshment of spirit in times of deep depression" (*TY* 146).

Spurgeon's writing also draws on the ministerial exhortations of Evangelist. In a selection of her reports she provides brief sermonic lessons to her readers. Though she suggests these moments in her writing are "meditation[s]" and she is "incompetent" or "absolutely unworthy" to write on any "Divine…theme" she, nevertheless, teaches, pleads, and seemingly preaches to her readers (*TYA* 351). Her messages focus primarily on two themes, warning against heresy and sin and remaining steadfast, both of which mirror Evangelist's words to the pilgrims. By representing her exhortations as "meditations" or devotions Spurgeon avoids any suggestion that her writing transgresses into formal theological teaching, reserved for male preachers. However, by drawing on Bunyan's language of pilgrimage and the teaching of Evangelist, the exemplary minister, her devotional writing *performs* as ministerial. Therefore, as a pastoral partner caring out her own ministry, Spurgeon suggests she too is a "finger-post" guiding Dissenters to the "right road."

Spurgeon represents herself, not only the books she distributes, as a guiding agent for wayward pilgrims. Echoing the imagery of *Pilgrim's Progress* and Evangelist's warning to "abhor" worldly doctrine she declares: "A little conformity to worldly ways…an occasional divergence from the narrow path which is the only safe road for Christ's followers…and the light of God's countenance is shut out" (*TY* 405). Furthermore, as a minister advises his congregation, she personally counsels her readers how to avoid theological "divergence": "Puritan literature is so greatly at a discount…I would advise those who believe in God's Word to invest as largely as possible in [these] volumes" (*TYA* 29). For, she suggests, these books are "guides and teachers" that help Dissenters "contend…against…'new gods'" and stay on the "only safe road" of biblical

truth (28). Mirroring the unabashed preaching of her husband, she declares the gods of "'New Theology'" are not merely "worldly" but a "modern device of Satan" (*TYA* 250-51). Therefore, in order maintain the "narrow path" Spurgeon urges her readers to "abhor" heresy and seek the light of Puritan faith.

In their exhortations both Evangelist and Spurgeon signal the importance of remaining committed to the godly path by "striving against sin" (Bunyan 84). Evangelist urges the pilgrims to examine their "own hearts" for any "deceitful" or "desperate wicked" sin (84). Spurgeon similarly preaches to her readers the importance of self-examination and repentance. In one of her sermonettes, she suggests it is merely a "little story," Spurgeon draws on the image of a "Syringa bush" in her garden to illustrate a variety of spiritual principles and theological promises (*TY* 400). She suggests the necessary pruning of the bush symbolizes the importance of removing "the deadly growth of…sin" and anything "that dares grow up between us and our God!" (406, 405). She not only teaches but, like Evangelist, she seeks reform. Cornering her readers she asks "now, what are you going to do? Let the trees grow higher…and your soul-domain become more darkened and desolate?" (406). She then demands the repentance of sin: "No-a thousand times, no…You will ask your Lord to show you all that is contrary to His will in you" (406). Here she is not meditating nor "giv[ing] advice," but preaching (*Hints* 6). Furthermore, she concludes her "story" not with a gentle moral, but a capitalized command. Echoing her husband's dramatic conviction of his congregation she announces: "cut the…darling sin…which has woven its tendrils into your inmost nature…Dear friend, do not hesitate, DO IT NOW" (407). Spurgeon suggests she is merely sharing an "experience" but her words, like that of Evangelist, carry a tone of authority and perform as a ministerial exhortation (404). Her

sermonic writing, therefore, contributes to her representation of *herself* as a "finger-post," firmly "pointing" pilgrims the right way.

Spurgeon warns and admonishes, but like a pastoral shepherd, she also encourages her readers to remain steadfast. Her instructional messages emphasize the importance of firm, unwavering faith, particularly given the contemporary challenges to Reformed doctrine. When Evangelist visits Christian he also provides both correction and support. As Bunyan notes in the margin, Evangelist's words to Christian and Faithful are to "encourageth them to steadfastness" (85). Following his first instruction to seek "the light" Evangelist repeatedly reminds Christian to "be not faithless, but believing" (23), to "hold out," "hold fast," and "believe stedfastly concerning things that are invisible" (84). Likewise, Spurgeon, drawing on the language of pilgrimage, exhorts her readers to "turn from the darkness, and seek the light, though hindrances…obstruct your progress; believe wholly in God, and trust in Him" (*TY* 401). She also provides confident declarations of faith to rally her flock: "God keep you firm and steadfast in the old faith…!" and "so, again I say, 'Courage, faint heart!'" (*TYA 231, TY* 273). Her messages also blend into prayers, as a minister speaking on behalf of his people: "Lord…grant to us, Thy children, the faith 'which ensures as seeing Him who is invisible'" (*TY* 273). Her words echoing Evangelist's reminder to trust and believe in the "invisible."

Spurgeon frames her exhortations through the guise of stories, experiences, and apologies, reflecting, as suggested earlier, her awareness of the gendered boundaries of formal theological writing and preaching. However, despite her generic facade, her messages are ministerial in form- shaped around a primary illustration, reliant on scripture, and focused on application- and content; her words echoing the warning, teaching, and encouragement of Evangelist, Bunyan's ideal minister. Through such pastoral writing she signals that, like the

Puritan text, her sermonic reports, are invaluable "finger-posts" directing readers to the "right road" of Reformed truth. Furthermore, her messages suggest Evangelist is not only a model for preaching men, but also for ministering women.

Though she insists her reports are not formal teaching on the "divine," Spurgeon confidently asserts that her writing is, nevertheless, both "ministering" and "labour[ing]" (*TYA* 350, *TY* 303). In doing so she depicts her work through two phrases that are, significantly, associated with both biblical and Puritan representations of pastoral work. In the New Testament the apostle Paul repeatedly portrays himself as one who "ministers" and "labours" for the gospel.[149] He also describes the work of preachers as those who "labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17). "Labour" implies Paul's ministry is not only work for God, but also work on behalf of, or for the benefit of others; labouring as a mother gives life to children. Therefore, he declares his labour is for the churches to which he ministers: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). In the previous chapter I also suggested Puritan writers draw extensively on similar maternal language in their representation of pastoral work.[150] Seventeenth-century preachers are commonly portrayed as "suckling" from the Word and "nursing" their congregants. The help Evangelist provides to the pilgrims is also described as pastoral-maternal "labouring." In one of his meetings with Evangelist Christian refers to him not only as his "good friend," but as one who "labor[s] for [his] eternal good" (83). Here, Evangelist's teaching, wisdom, and godly direction is represented as "labor" for both the pilgrim's earthly well-being and the state of his soul.

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[149] Paul declares he is "made a minister" of "the gospel" (Col. 1:23, 29) and he "laboured" for the gospel (1 Cor. 15:10, Phil. 2:16, 4:3, 1 Thes. 3:5).
[150] See chapter three, "Spurgeon's Representation of Her position and Ministry."

Spurgeon draws on maternal language both in her portrayal of her role as "nursing mother," her work "feeding" ministers books, and in her "labour" for her readers, her writing of the Fund reports. Referring to the preparing of her reports she declares it is "goodly work…solemn labour" (*TY* 303). She repeatedly emphasizes that "writ[ing] these Annual reports" is "labour," "daily labour," "unremitting labour," "busy labour," and "well-requited labour" (*TY* 326, 237, 243, 428, *TYA* 28). Her "labour" is for God and, significantly, his "servants," the "hard-working Pastors" (*TY* 303, *TYA* 350). She further suggests it is a "privilege" not only labouring for, but also "*ministering* to…the saints" (*TYA* 350; italics added). Mirroring Evangelist's labor, she implies her work is also for the "eternal good" of pilgrims. She notes "the labour of writing" is to provide updates on Fund work, but as ministerial labor, it is also for her readers' spiritual and eternal benefit: "Dear friends, if…this little book…speaks to your heart…helps your faith and love…I will be rewarded for writing it" (*TY* 248). She also declares her reports will, like Evangelist's exhortations, "encourage faith [and] stimulate…action," "strengthen the faith of His servants," and "win some heart or stimulate others…to a firmer faith" (*TY* 193, 431). Echoing the language of pastoral self-representation from *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Bible, and Puritan sermons, Spurgeon suggests her writing, though not formal pastoral work, is, nevertheless, "ministering" to and for the saints. In doing so she signals the ministerial wife's work may be considered necessary "labor," not only on behalf of her husband or "the female sex," but all of God's servants (*Hints* vi). She may also perform as a "finger-post"; labouring and "pointing" with her own ministry, her own voice.

VI. "Demolishing Doubting Castle": The Spiritual Agency of the Puritan Woman

Though Christian and Hopeful are able to eventually "escape with speed" from the "stinking Dungeon" the Giant remains a threat to future pilgrims, as confirmed by their pillar

warning those "that followed after" of the "danger" ahead (114, 115). As I've suggested in this chapter, it is this giant "danger," both familiar and daunting to her Dissenting readers, that Spurgeon relies on in her representation of "modern thought." By drawing on the pilgrims' "deliberate" turn from "right road" she dramatizes the spiritual consequences of liberal theology and suggests the doctrine, like the Giant, is an evil "divergence" from "the way." Therefore, her readers, like the pilgrims, ought to "fear being belated" by such an enemy (*TYA* 28). In light of this fear and heretical danger, she establishes her Fund, and herself, as the "finger-post" of direction. However, in a report three years after this 1887 reference to *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spurgeon signals that her work is no longer merely "pointing" ministers away from divergent theology, but also actively defending against it.

Responding to a letter from a young Baptist minister Spurgeon suggests she is "encouraged" by his faith in God's "own Word" for she is concerned that "young preachers [may] be drawn away and enticed by the blandishments of those who preach 'another gospel,'" namely, the idolatrous gospel of "modern thought" (*TYA* 120). She then declares that her "hope" for her work is to directly "counteract[…]" these "evil influences" (120). Here she dramatically elevates her representation of the Fund. The distributed Puritan texts of "sound…Evangelical truth" (120) are not merely opposing or resisting, but acting against "evil."[151] Spurgeon is, therefore, an *active* participant in the battle against heresy. Though the pilgrims are not able to fight the Giant, Spurgeon's portrayal of her Fund's opposition to the enemy is still directly tied to the allegory. In the second part of *Pilgrim's Progress* the Giant reappears. This time, when the pilgrims enter the grounds it is not by error, but with the intention to defeat the Giant. Determined to "overcome Evil" and fight "for their Lives" they valiantly bring the Giant "down

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[151] In a later report she emphasizes that the Fund's distributed texts are also "a counteracting influence to unsound doctrinal teaching" (*TYA* 254).

to the Ground," ensuring their victory by "sever[ing] his head from his shoulders" (262). Both the Giant and his castle are "demolish[ed]" (262). Spurgeon's readers would not only link her Doubting Castle reference to the scene of despair, but also, to the scene of "deliverance" (265). In turn, associating the work of the Fund with both protection from a heretical "Giant" and heroic counteraction against it.

The significance of Spurgeon's implied reference to the second part, however, is not only the death of the Giant, but the pilgrim who inspires the defeat. Part two of *Pilgrim's Progress* provides the account of Christian's wife, Christiana, and their four sons. The battle against the Giant is led by Great-heart, Christiania's guide and protector, and her sons. Although Christiana does not engage the Giant herself, the defeat is represented through her journey. Therefore, it may be argued that "it is Christiana, not Christian; who possesses the power to 'bruise the head' of the enemy" (Austin 507). Though Spurgeon does not formally take part in the Down-Grade, by drawing on this scene and portraying her Fund as battling "evil," she represents herself as embodying the power to "bruise" the theological enemy. Upon defeating the Giant the pilgrims also "set…at Liberty" fellow pilgrims who "were Prisoners in Doubting Castle" (261, 64). Likewise, through her Fund and the "blessed influence" of the Puritan texts Spurgeon not only points Dissenters to the right road, but she, too, liberates them from the enemy. She declares when ministers who are "disciple[s] of…'The New Theology'" are given books from the Fund they receive "deliverance" and are "set free from [its] entanglements" (*TYA* 251). Here, in the context of the Down-Grade, Spurgeon represents her own work, not her husband's, as demolishing "modern thought" and saving God's men.

Charles Spurgeon is often considered the leading figure of the Down-Grade Controversy and "the first Evangelical with international influence to declare war on modernism" (MacArthur

258). I have suggested in this chapter, however, that Susannah Spurgeon ought to be considered not only Charles's "help," but the first evangelical *woman*, with arguably international influence, to declare a "counteract[ion]" against liberal theology. Her representation of the Down-Grade provides invaluable, unexamined contemporary insight into the Controversy; an event that shaped the history of the Baptist tradition. Her reports are not a reiteration of Charles's articles, but the arguments of a Puritan woman, informed by her own theological knowledge and twenty years ministering to ministers. Thus, by drawing on Bunyan's language and authority Spurgeon presents a formidable polemic against the Giant of "modern thought" and continues to re-shape the position of the "help-meet." Her work and role defined not merely by her relation to Charles, but by the nourishment, guidance, and spiritual freedom she provides Dissenting ministers and pilgrims.

Chapter 5:
"Lectures to *her* Students": Conclusion

I. "The Woman Who Loved to Give Books": The Fund Continues

Following the second published collection of her reports in 1895, Spurgeon continued to manage and operate the Fund for another eight years until her death in October 1903. She provided short updates on the Fund's progress, often titled "Mrs. Spurgeon's Work-room," in *The Sword and the Trowel*. According to her first biographer, Charles Ray, Spurgeon left "a sum of money" in her will for the continuation of her Fund (249). She also "expressed a wish that her friend and companion of forty years, Miss E.H. Thorne," who often assisted Spurgeon's Fund work, "should carry on the Book Fund with its various branches" (Ray 249). Ray further adds that "Miss Thorne has willingly agreed to do this" (249). For the following ten years Thorne continued the Fund and published reports in *The Sword and the Trowel* under the name of "Mrs C.H. Spurgeon's Book Fund." The Book Fund and reports continued until 1913 after which there are no records. Yet, the Fund's work continues today.

In 1960 a Protestant Reformed charitable organization, The Banner of Truth, established the Banner of Truth Trust Book Fund with the desire to continue the work of "Mrs Spurgeon's Book Fund for Pastors" (The Banner "Book Fund"). The Banner's publishing house, under the same name, also reprints the works of many English Puritans, echoing Spurgeon's mission to revive Puritan books and doctrine.[152] The Banner Book Fund operates on similar principles

[152] Historians suggest that in England "'Bunyan's century' had been ended decisively by twentieth-century secularisation" (Coffey 340). Though the influence and popularity of Puritanism had faded the second half of the twentieth century "witness[ed] a quiet but steady revival of traditional Calvinism" (Coffey 339). In the 1950s British evangelicals, "disturbed by new religious and secular trends," sought to encourage contemporary Christians and churches to return to "the old paths" of Puritanism (Coffey 339). Within this context the Banner of Truth Trust emerged. In 1955 Sidney Norton, minister of St John's Church in Oxford, and his ministerial assistant Iain Murray established a magazine, titled "Banner of Truth," inspired by the Puritan commitment and revival spirit of CH.

established by Spurgeon and "supplies ministers, missionaries, colleges and seminaries, and needy individuals…with books either free of charge or…heavily subsidised" ("Book Fund").[153] Over the next sixty years the Banner Fund distributed "hundreds of thousands of books…all over the world" ("Book Fund"). By republishing hundreds of Puritan titles, including "a series of abridged 'Puritan paperbacks' for readers with less time on their hands," Banner also established "a new Puritan canon" (Coffey "Puritan Legacies" 339). The publishing house currently publishes and distributes CH. Spurgeon's works along with thousands of other titles (sermons, devotional texts, biblical commentaries, and biographies) by various Protestant authors and theologians of the Reformed Calvinist tradition. Like Spurgeon's Fund the Banner Fund has rigid doctrinal guidelines for their published and distributed texts. The Banner Fund declares it "stand[s] for…Calvinism" and all books "must pass theological…scrutiny" and adhere to "the doctrines of grace" (The Banner "What Makes a Banner Book"). The Banner Fund is directly inspired by Spurgeon's work and dedicated to the same theological mission and principles and yet Banner does not publish any of Spurgeon's texts. This is perhaps the greatest testament to the continued misrepresentation and minimization of her work and writing.

The Banner Fund does, however, publish one recent text about Spurgeon. The book is just the third text addressing her life published in the last hundred years and the only non-biographical study of Spurgeon. The short work, 17 pages, presents Spurgeon through a new lens: children's literature. The text, *The Woman Who Loved To Give Books* (2017), is a hardback picture book written by Rebecca VanDoodewaard and illustrated by Blair Bailie. Despite the

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Spurgeon. Their mission was to revive Puritan writings for contemporary readers and churches (The Banner "Story of Banner"). In 1957, with the assistance of Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones and the Anglican scholar J.I. Packer, the non-profit charity, The Banner of Truth Trust, and publishing house was formed to republish the works and doctrines of the Protestant Reformers and English Puritans (Coffey 339).

[153] By 1967 Banner Books was distributing texts to thirty-three overseas countries. The worldwide reach of Banner publications continues to the present day ("Story of Banner"). The Fund is supported by gifts from individuals and from the revenues derived by the sales of Banner books ("Book Fund").

simplicity, written for one to three year olds, the text validates both Spurgeon's work and the books she distributes in such a way that has yet to be done. In the book she emerges, through both text and image, as an industrious, independent woman dedicated not only to her husband, but to her own work and service for God.

First, on the book's cover VanDoodewaard recognizes Spurgeon not as "Mrs. CH. Spurgeon," but simply Susannah Spurgeon. On the cover illustration Spurgeon is pictured alone, without Charles, surrounded by stacks of books. In the text VanDoodewaard recognizes Spurgeon supported her husband's ministry, noting that prior to her illness she "used to go with her husband when he preached" (6). However, the text emphasizes Spurgeon's desire to "serve the Lord" through her own means (7). VanDoodewaard confirms the Fund was established by Spurgeon's own "great idea" and her observation that "books can help…ministers" (9, 17). The emphasis is not upon celebrating CH. Spurgeon's books, but recognizing Spurgeon's "idea" and desire to help others. VanDoodewaard explains to young readers that Spurgeon "starts sending good books to ministers who don't have enough money to buy them" (11). The illustration accompanying this sentence is of Spurgeon working, not with Charles at his desk, but at her own large desk. Spurgeon is pictured busily preparing and wrapping books with with her "tools" - ink, scissors, packing paper, string- and the help of friends (perhaps alluding to Miss Thorne). The image represents Spurgeon not as a minister's wife or mother, but as a hard-working skilled woman, dedicated to "poor ministers" (13). The description of the text on the back cover further emphasizes the book is not about Mrs. CH. Spurgeon the "help-meet," but rather, "the story of Susannah's Spurgeon's service for the Lord."

Second, VanDoodewaard emphasizes the benefit, even seemingly miraculous agency, of the Fund's books. The distributed texts are described as "good books" with an entire page

illustrating an elated minister opening his parcel (11). The accompanying text explains the immense value of the books for they "help the minister understand the Bible" (113). The texts are also given their own illustrated page with wrapped parcels of books floating around the words, as if distributed miraculously across the sky. The image echoes Spurgeon's portrayal of her books as "little messengers," travelling on their own and "find[ing] their way into places" across "all parts of the world" (*TY* 340, *TYA* 140). In a video below the text's listing on Banner's website VanDoodewaard explains she has written this series of books, including Spurgeon's, to help children recognize "names and faces" of church history" (The Banner "Children's Books"). As such her text presents Spurgeon not as a minister's wife, but as an historical figure worthy of recognition. VanDoodewaard's work, therefore, contributes to the recovery of Spurgeon, at least in the minds of young readers, as a Dissenting woman whose textual work shaped the history of the Christian church.

As VanDoodewaard notes, Spurgeon suggests her distributed Puritan texts "help" ministers in seemingly countless ways. The inspired benefits attributed to the texts have been examined throughout this dissertation, in which I have argued Spurgeon's dramatization of the book contributes to her work of Puritan reform and her reframing of the minister's wife's position. As the distributor of such divine agents she is not merely giving books, but also supplying godly sustenance, nursing ministers with scriptural milk, and pointing them to Puritan theology. I suggest, however, that Spurgeon provides one final image representative of the work she performs and the position she holds.

II. “A potent force”: The “power” and “profit” of Spurgeon’s Work

In Spurgeon’s introduction to her 1883 report she opens by celebrating the “blessings” of her Fund books to, as she suggests, inspire her readers with “fresh interest in the treasures of which [she has] the charge” (*TY* 250). Here she declares the Fund texts work “marvels of gladness in hundreds of homes” as they “light up” a “poor pastor’s study” (249). The books are, again, personified as “life-long friends” that “serve [the minister] faithfully and ungrudgingly till his death (250). She further adds that the beloved books will “be taken into his heart, and cherished” (250). Her description of the text as both a dedicated companion that “serves” the minister and as a “cherished…life-long friend” is reminiscent not of a godly book, but of a godly wife. Spurgeon signals she has this parallel in mind as she declares the books are not only valuable for ministers, but they are “true helpmeets” (251). This is the one instance throughout her entire volume of reports that she draws on this phrase and, significantly, it is representative not of the support she provides Charles, but the faithful “help” the text provides the minister. In the same section, as if to define her work against the quaint “help” of the text, she portrays herself not as a minister’s companion, but as an agent of God wielding both “power” and a “potent force” (249).

Spurgeon suggests distributing “cherished” books is service she performs, not for ministers, but for “the Lord” (*TY* 251). Therefore, her “beloved work” is a direct “charge” from God (249-50). As such her reports are not only records of the work, but “account[s] of her stewardship” (251). She then declares that as a servant of God she possesses the “power of making others happy” (249). This power, she explains, is a “potent force” for in “bestow[ing] books” she transforms “sad and weary hearts” and provides ministers a “vital necessity” (249). By establishing the book as the “*true* helpmeet” Spurgeon continues to idealize the Puritan text

and redefine the ministerial wife's role (251; italics added). She counters the quaint feminine "help" and friendship definitive of both the traditional wife and the book companion with terms of masculine authority: charge, power, potent, and force. In doing so she portrays herself as not only a provider of nourishment or guidance, but through a divine order and the distribution of helpful "companions," she is also a godly, powerful steward. Her self-representation further suggests the minister's wife is not a subservient assistant, but one who seemingly shares in the duty, service, and prerogative traditionally reserved for the minister himself. However, by attributing both her calling and potency to God she ensures her work, and in turn the agency and authority she ascribes to the minister's wife, is sanctioned by him.

As noted in the introduction, the biographical and devotional representations of Spurgeon define her life, work, and even her "legacy" through her relationship to and support of her husband. Her written texts remain ignored by contemporary scholars, historians, and even the publishing house founded to continue her work. Though her writing remains obscure, her reports were not only widely published and distributed in the nineteenth century, but were also considered by many Dissenters to be of immense value. In her 1884 Report, just ten years into the Fund, Spurgeon records that one donor, "an aged disciple, who has known and loved the Lord for many years," read her annual reports regularly (*TY* 326). He writes that the reports not only informed him of her "labour of love," but that her words were "the means of reviving [his] faith" and "helping [him] to put more confidence in [his] blessed Lord" (*TY* 326). He then declares Spurgeon's reports ought to be considered not merely records of charitable work, but rather, quite extraordinarily, "Lectures to *her* Students." Here, an elderly man of spiritual authority suggests Spurgeon's texts are so beneficial to his life, and provide such "profit," that it is as if he was reading Charles's *Lectures to my Students*, the seminal work of the most

celebrated theologian of his time (*TY* 326). By including this letter in her reports Spurgeon represents her work as embodying the spiritual, even theological, benefits of the text that inspired ministers around the world and established the entire work of the Fund.

This dissertation has argued Spurgeon's writing, when studied and contextualized, is not merely an appendage to the life of Charles Spurgeon. Rather, her texts reflect the independent work of a Puritan woman writer, *her* Lectures, and they provide a substantial contribution to Dissenting history, gender studies, and textuality. Therefore, this project reaffirms that Susannah Spurgeon ought to be known not only as "Mrs. CH. Spurgeon," but also, in her own words, as a formidable "supplier" of textual nourishment, a "nursing-mother" of ministerial men, a "finger-post" of doctrinal guidance, and a "potent" agent of God.

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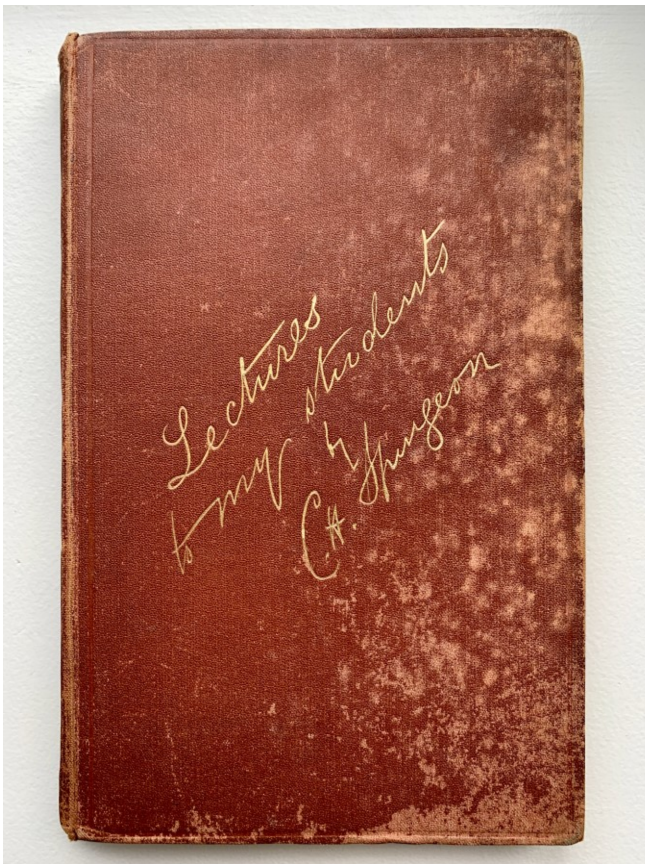
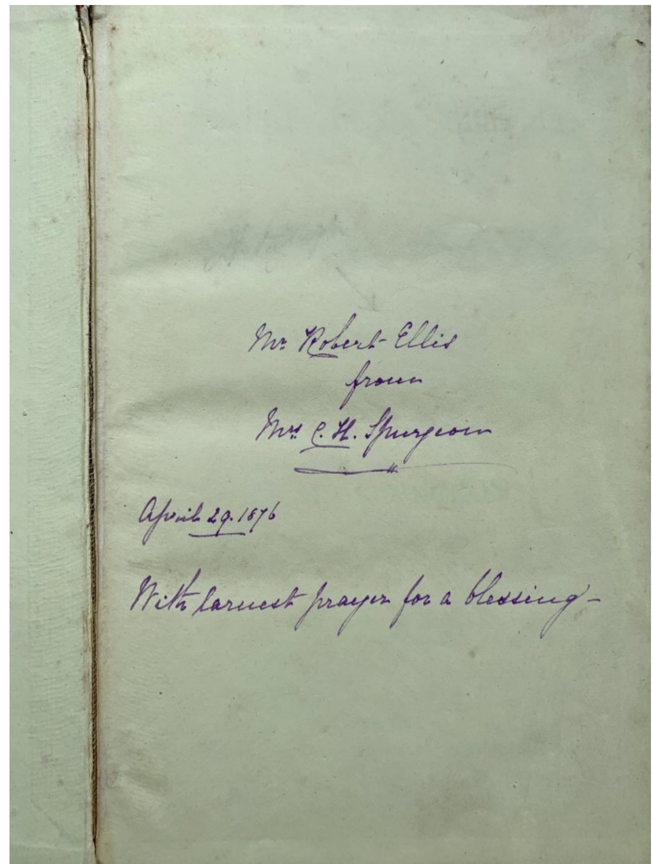
Appendix 1: Images

1. The text that started the Fund: 1876 first edition of CH. Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students.*



2. Susannah Spurgeon inscribed many of the texts distributed by the Fund. Below is one such inscription on the front endpaper of the previously pictured 1876 *Lectures.*



Source: Author's Library

3. Hand-written letter by Spurgeon inserted inside a copy of CH. Spurgeon's *The Treasury of David* distributed by the Fund.

Nightingale Lane,
Clapham Common. S.W.

Aug 23. 77.

Dear Sir —

The distribution of the "Treasury of David" is limited to Pastors of Churches, not willingly, but of necessity, since without such limitation, both time, & strength, & funds would be overwhelmingly taxed. I have broken the rule in your favour, because my heart could not refuse your earnest desire to possess the vols. but "See thou tell no man", for your case is an exception, not a precedent. Very truly yours, C. Spurgeon.

Source: Author's Library

Appendix 2: CH. Spurgeon's Texts Distributed By the Book Fund

Title (all published by Passmore & Alabaster)	Reference in Reports	Notes
Lectures to My Students	*TY* 6	First text distributed by the Fund. Price: 2s. 6d.
Treasury of David	*TY* 10	7 Vol. Commentary on the Psalms. Price: 8s. each. Re-issued by publishers in 44 monthly parts, one shilling each.
Morning and Evening Daily Readings	*TY* 18	Price: Cloth, gilt edges 3s. 6d., leather 5s, calf or morocco 7s. 6d.
Evening by Evening	*TY* 18	Price: 3s. 6d.
Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon	*TY* 27	Vols. I to XL. Price: 7s. each
The Sword and the Trowel	*TY* 71	
Farm Sermons	*TY* 233	Price: 3s. 6d. Illustrated
Feathers for Arrows	*TYA* 75 (recorded in letter from minister)	Price: 2s. 6d.
Illustrations and Meditations or Flowers from a Puritan's Garden	*TY* 267	1883. Conference Present. Price: 2s. 6d.
Commenting and Commentaries	(*TYA*) 75	Price: 2s. 6d.
My Sermon Notes	*TYA* 118 (letter)	Price: Individual parts 2s. 6d. Bound together in one volume, 5s.
Abide in Christ	*TYA* 199	
The Gospel of the Kingdom	*TYA* 209	Commentary on Matthew. Preface by Susannah Spurgeon. Price: 6s., half calf 10s, calf 15s.

Title (all published by Passmore & Alabaster)	**Reference in Reports**	**Notes**
Around the Wicket Gate	*TYA* 220 (letter)	Price: Cloth, gilt, illustrated 1s, French Morocco 2s.
Twelve Striking Sermons	*TYA* 243 (letter)	Price: Bound in limp cloth 1s., Post free, 1s. 2d.
The Greatest Fight in the World	*TYA* 251	Price: In paper covers 6d.
The Great Shield of Faith	*TYA* 287	Price: 6d.
All of Grace	*TYA* 293	Price: 1s., Persian Morocco, gilt edges, 2s.
According to Promise	*TYA* 294	Price: 1s., Morocco, gilt edges, 2s.
"Till He Come": Communion Meditations and Addresses	*TYA* 341	Conference Present. Price: Cloth gilt 32. 6d.
Facsimile Pulpit Notes	*TYA* 337 (letter)	Price: Cloth extra 2s. 6d.

Appendix 3: Texts Distributed By the Book Fund

Title	Author	Reference	Description	Publisher	Notes
A Body of Divinity: Contained in Sermons Upon the Assembly's Catechism	Thomas Watson (1620-1686), Puritan.	*TY* 25	Published 1692. Preface by CH. Spurgeon	Passmore & Alabaster.	Price: 6s.
The "works of "Haldane" (Robert or James)	Robert Haldane (1764-1842), churchman. James Haldane (1768-1851), Protestant church leader.	*TY* 30			
The Five Royal Books: My King, Royal Commandments, Royal Bounty, The Royal Invitation, and Loyal Responses	Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79), evangelical poet, hymn writer, author.	*TY* 76	Given to pastors (past graduates of CH. Spurgeon's Pastor's College) who attend the Annual Conference at the Pastor's College.	Purchased 1000 copies from Messrs. Nisbet.	Cost of texts covered by the Fund.
Kept For the Master's Use	Frances Ridley Havergal.	*TY* 80		Messrs. Nisbet	Spurgeon intends to send a copy with "every parcel" from the Book Fund (*TY* 80).

Title	Author	Reference	Description	Publisher	Notes
The "works" of Hodge	Charles Hodge (1797-1878), American Presbyterian, theologian, Calvinist.	*TY* 102 (letter)			
The "works" of De Pressense	Edmond Dehault de Pressense (1824-1891), French Protestant, evangelical leader.	*TY* 102 (letter)			
The Glories of Christ	James Smith?	*TY* 111	Conference Present.		
A Homiletic Encyclopedia of Illustrations in Theology and Morals: A Handbook of Practical Divinity, and a Commentary on Holy Scripture	Robert Aitkin Bertram (1830-1886), Congregational minister, author, hymnist.	*TY* 121 (letter)	Published 1880. Draws on Puritan Works. Conference Present.		
Gift from Religious Tract Society		*TY* 135	120 books		

Title	Author	Reference	Description	Publisher	Notes
Handbook of Revivals: For the Use of Winners of Souls	Henry Fish (1820-77), American minister, Baptist theologian.	*TY* 165	Published 1874. Survey of religious awakenings.		
In Prospect of Sunday: A Collection of Analyses, Arguments, Applications, Counsels, Cautions, Etc.	Rev. George Seaton Bowes.	*TY* 178	Published 1880. Conference Present.	Nisbet and Co.	
Spurgeon's reports		*TY* 193 (letter)			
Our Christian Classics: Readings From the Best Divines, with Notices of Biographical and Critical	James Hamilton (1814-1867), Scottish minister.	*TY* 213 (letter)	Published 1857-9. 4 vols.		
What Aileth Thee?	Anna Bartlett Warner (1827-1915), American hymn writer, poet.	*TY* 213	Published 1881. Conference Present.		
Likely *The Complete Commentary*	Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Dissenting minister, Puritan.	*TY* 265 (letter)	Published 1708-10.		

Title	Author	Reference	Description	Publisher	Notes
"Books by George Muller"	George Muller (1805-1898), missions, established orphanage.	*TY* 317 (letter)			
Our Lord's Life on Earth	William Hanna (1808-1882), Dissenting Scottish minister.	*TY* 320	Published 1882. Conference Present.	RTS	
Exposition of the New Testament and Old Testament	John Gill (1697-1771), Baptist minister, Puritan theologian.	*TY* 358 (letter)	Published 1746-8. 6 Vols.		
Meditations and Disquisitions Upon Certain Psalms	Richard Baker (1568-1645), Puritan.	*TY* 377	Conference Present.		
Abide in Christ	Andrew Murray (1828-1917), South African minister, writer.	*TY* 392			
Like Christ	Andrew Murray.	*TY* 392			
Ten Years	Susannah Spurgeon.	*TYA* 24, 184, 247			

Title	Author	Reference	Description	Publisher	Notes
Theopneustia: or The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures	Francois Gaussen (1790-1863), Swiss Protestant minister, professor.	*TYA* 75	Published 1840.		
"Greek Work"		*TYA* 76	For a minister's study of the Greek language		
Westwood Leaflets (part of *Ten Years*)	Susannah Spurgeon.	*TYA* 84, 128-9			
The Hereafter: Sheol, Hades, and Hell, the World to Come, and the Scripture Doctrine of Retribution according to Law	James Fyfe, Protestant evangelical minister.	*TYA* 125	Published 1890. Conference Present.	T & T Clark.	
From The Pulpit to the Palm-Branch: A Memorial of C.H. Spurgeon		*TYA* 209	Including the official report of the funeral services. Conference Present.	Passmore & Alabaster.	Price: 2s. 6d.