

**SPURGEON v.
HYPER-CALVINISM**
The Battle for Gospel Preaching



Iain H. Murray

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C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) is best-remembered today for the remarkable ministry he exercised in London during the Victorian era. His influence was incalculable. Thousands listened to his preaching every week, while hundreds of thousands throughout the world later read his sermons in published form. A man of great natural gifts, charm and wit, Spurgeons master passion was evident in everything he did to preach Jesus Christ to all as the only Saviour. But as early as 1855 this brought him into a serious and prolonged doctrinal controversy with Hyper-Calvinism. By tracing this conflict, exploring the issues involved in it and showing what was at stake in them.

Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism Details

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From Reader Review Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism for online ebook

A.J. Jr. says

A much needed correction to the dreary error of hyper-Calvinism

Robert Luff says

A pretty easy read that helped me better understand both the Truth and the error. Iain Murray is a dynamic yet thoughtful historian whom I would recommend to all Christians. This particular book is so short and easy to read that it would be a great first book for anyone interested in learning more about Calvinism, or as someone's first theological biography.

Logan Almy says

One of my favorite books of all time

Lily-joseph Jo says

It is a great book defending true Calvinism against Hyper-Calvinism by presenting Spurgeon's view on this controversy. Every Christian who admires Spurgeon and oppose Calvinism should take time to read it to find out how Spurgeon viewed Calvinism as a five-point Calvinist.

Hong Che Hwee says

An excellent short work for anyone who is first acquainting himself with Spurgeon.

As Murray summarises it well, Spurgeon's opposition to the Hyper-Calvinists are his persuasion that:

1. Gospel invitations are universal, not restricted only to the elect
2. God's word and promises are sufficient warrant for one's faith
3. Human responsibility remains relevant alongside Divine sovereignty, and
4. The love of God extends to all, not just the elect.

My favourite quotes from the book:

That subjective experience is not required before anyone can trust in scriptural promises, Spurgeon says: "If we begin to preach to sinners that they must have a certain sense of sin and a certain measure of conviction, such teaching would turn the sinner away from God in Christ to himself. .. The gospel is that you believe in Christ Jesus; that you get right out of yourself, and depend alone in him. Do you say, "I feel so guilty"? You are certainly guilty, whether you feel it or not ... Come to Christ because you are guilty, not because you

have been prepared to come by looking at your guilt. Trust nothing of your own, not even your sense of need." (Pages 78, 79)

On the subject that the sovereign will of God is seemingly inconsistent with man's responsibility, Spurgeon says "Both are true ... the system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once ... Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there is no presidency of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free to be responsible, I am driven at once to Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestinates, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is the fault of our weak judgment ... it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other." (Page 82)

On evangelism, Spurgeon says "We win by love. We win hearts for Jesus by love, by sympathy with their sorrows, by anxiety lest they should perish, by pleading with God for them with all our hearts that they would be left to die unsaved, by pleading with them for God that, for their own sake, they would seek mercy and find grace." (Page 94)

On reaping the fruit of our labour, Spurgeon says: "We must not expect to see an immediate reward for all the good we do ... His good word which we have spoken shall live. Perhaps not just yet, but some day we shall reap what we have sown." (Page 109)

Matt Chapman says

Love this book and loved reading it again!

An account of Spurgeon's passionate defence of the universal gospel invitation. The warrant for responding to the gospel is not a man's feelings or his sense of being elect, but simply the invitation to come to Christ. 'Whosoever will may come and God will in no ways cast out any who come and take refuge in Christ.'

What warrant does the sinner have to believe that God will accept all those who trust in Christ, whoever they are and however black their sins might be? Simply God's free invitation and promise that ALL who believe on Christ will be saved.

What an incentive to invite one and all to look to Christ and be saved!

Jeremy Lee says

Excellent! This book if more widely read would help to dispel many mischaracterizations of Reformed believers.

Mark A Powell says

It is human nature to take any biblical truth and twist it to either extreme. Murray, whose "The Forgotten Spurgeon" dealt with the famous preacher's Ariminian conflict, now visits Spurgeon's battle with the

opposite extreme—hyper-Calvinism. Many in Spurgeon's day refused to extend the gospel to the lost, an error he counters with four Scriptural truths, which Murray details in these pages. This short work is valuable for both its historical record and its theological astuteness.

Shawn Paterson says

This book was refreshing to my Calvinist soul. A critical book for the "young, restless, and Reformed," as well as anyone who adheres to Calvinist soteriology. Reveals hidden tendencies within our thinking and gospel proclamation that lean toward an unbiblical and ultra-Calvinist paradigm. Deals with the facts of Spurgeon's earliest controversy over hyper-Calvinism, as well as the theological topics of the universal gospel invitation, the warrant of faith, human responsibility (in relation to God's sovereignty), and the love of God.

Here are some choice quotes...

Murray: "Free-agency is not to be confused with free-will. Since the Fall, men have not lost their responsibility but they have lost the ability, the will, to obey God."

Spurgeon: "That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see."

Spurgeon: "I believe in predestination, yea, even in its very jots and tittles. I believe that the path of a single grain of dust in the March wind is ordained and settled by a decree which cannot be violated; that every word and thought of man, every fluttering of a sparrow's wing, every flight of a fly... that everything, in fact is foreknown and foreordained. But I do equally believe in the free agency of man, that man acts as he wills, especially in moral operations—choosing the evil with a will that is unbiased by anything that comes from God, biased only by his own depravity of heart and the perverseness of his habits; choosing the right too, with perfect freedom, though sacredly guided and led by the Holy Spirit... I believe that man is accountable as if there were no destiny whatsoever... Where these two truths meet I do not know, nor do I want to know. They do not puzzle me, since I have given up my mind to believing them both."

Murray: "In the apostolic preaching to the lost, recorded in the book of Acts, nothing is said of the doctrine of election, while in the Epistles it is scarcely ever omitted. In accordance with this approach, Calvin, in the later editions of his Institutes, moved his treatment of election to follow teaching on justification. He recognized that Scripture generally introduces the doctrine of election to show believers their security and certainty of their salvation and to make clear who made them differ."

Spurgeon: "Some have supposed that when we believe with David, in Psalm 115, that God hath done whatsoever he hath pleased, we deny free agency, and of necessity moral responsibility also. Nay, but we declare that those who would do so are tinctured with the old captious spirit of him who said, 'Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?' and our answer is that of Paul, 'Nay, but O man, who are thou that replies against God?' Can you understand it, for I cannot, how a man is a free agent, a responsible agent, so that his sin is his own willful sin and lies with him and never with God, yet at the same time God's purposes are fulfilled, and his will is done ben by demons and corrupt men? — I cannot comprehend it: without hesitation I believe it, and rejoice so to do, I never hope to comprehend it. I worship a God I never expect to comprehend... It is my firm belief that everything in heaven, and earth and hell, will be seen to be, in the long run, part of the divine plan, yet never is God the author or the accomplice of sin... sin rests with man, wholly with man, and yet by some strange overruling force, Godlike and mysterious, like the existence of God, his supreme will is accomplished... to deny this truth because we cannot understand it, were to shut ourselves out of a great deal of important knowledge."

Tom Brennan says

Murray knows his English Protestants. Here he provides us an excellent little book with an insight into one of Spurgeon's by now largely forgotten battles, a tangle with hyper-Calvinism that occurred early in his ministry. In this book, Murray shows us how Spurgeon took a stand against the more egregious aspects of Calvinism, especially those that prevented an active pursuit of the sinner. I am not a Calvinist, and sometimes that bothers me when I read Spurgeon. This book reassures me that Spurgeon kept his Calvinism in check in this respect. It also reminds us that battles come to all of us in the ministry, big or little, famous or nondescript. Additionally, the book contains numerous excerpts and quotes from Spurgeon's sermons of that era that would be excellent all on their own.

In short, this is not a good book. It is a very good bordering on excellent book.

Gordy says

This is a fantastic book! Spurgeon was a Calvinist and not afraid to admit it, rather he was keen to advocate the doctrines. In his view Spurgeon simply believed the Bible! This belief included the commission to preach the gospel and freely offer Christ to everyone. The book is a great book to smash the thinking of modern non-calvinists who call us all "Hyper-Calvinists" showing complete ignorance in the subject. Of course it must be said that for Spurgeon and all true calvinists that it is the gospel that comes first and it must always be Jesus whom we glorify! For myself the Arminian God is just too small!

Matthew says

Spurgeon strikes a biblical balance between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, never denying either. He brings great wisdom for both tracks. I'm grateful for men who say, I don't understand how they work together, but I will preach them because they are in the Word.

Daniel says

This book is useful for understanding C. H. Spurgeon's battles with genuine hyper-Calvinism. The problem is that the author lumps high-Calvinism in with hyper-Calvinism, and thus assumes that anyone who denies that God sincerely loves and desires the salvation of the reprobate is a hyper-Calvinist. Like Spurgeon, Iain Murray delights in Paradox Theology as a cloak for the irrationality of his views. Neither man understood the difference between a mystery that is beyond full comprehension by human beings (such as the Trinity) and a blatant contradiction.

I first read the book when I was 18 and thought it was brilliant. As a "cage-stage" Calvinist, it seemed to give me a good defence mechanism against Arminian charges of hyper-Calvinism. Reading it nearly 16 years later, I am not so convinced as I was upon first reading. Certainly, we should shun the genuine hyper-Calvinism that denies duty faith or advocates only preaching to sensible sinners. High Calvinism has a place within the Reformed tradition, though it is not the only legitimate expression of the Reformed tradition.

Spurgeon seemed to have some realisation of that point; it would appear that the Banner of Truth do not. Reading it again, I can see why reprobation is not something emphasised by the Banner of Truth men. Hence, A. W. Pink's teaching on the subject was removed from their edition of the Sovereignty of God.

Michael Stilley says

So helpful.

Michael says

The more I read about Spurgeon the more I grow to like and admire him. Far from the kind of guy you might have thought or been taught he was, this book shows more of him as a man totally reliant on God and standing alone, even in a great controversy surrounding his beloved doctrines of Grace. Murray does an excellent job again in presenting a biography not just about a man, but God working through a man.
