

numerous quotations and close each chapter with a bibliography, providing ample material for confirming or building upon their work. The authors provide clear and irenic analysis and explanation of the persons and documents discussed, setting them in their historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts. The authors persuasively argue that a robust doctrine of Scripture existed among Baptists from the beginning. The chapters weave together fascinating narratives of Baptist thought leaders and show the nature and impact of their ideas.

To comprise a single volume, such a study must be selective. Readers should know that the book emphasizes Baptists in England and America. Among American Baptists, some readers might expect to see treatment of how various independent Baptist groups view the Bible, but such is not the focus of this work. Understandably, much of the work centers on the heritage and challenges of Southern Baptists, who remain the largest Protestant denomination in America.

Bush and Nettles have contributed an enduring resource for those studying Baptist history and Christian theology. A beautiful hardcover binding adorns this edition, appropriately included in the publisher's "legacy series." *Baptists and the Bible* deserves pride of place in the syllabi of Baptist history and theology courses, merits consideration for classes on the doctrine of Scripture, and is worthy of a place on the shelves and in the hands of pastors and church members who wish to understand, articulate, and apply the Bible as the very Word of God.

Douglas Smith
Graham Bible College, Bristol, TN

Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of Charles H. Spurgeon, by Thomas Breimaier. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. xvi + 271 pp. \$35.00.

Charles Spurgeon numbers among history's most prominent English-speaking preachers. His powerful preaching shaped generations of preachers, and he remains a topic of significant interest and research. Breimaier explores Spurgeon's biblical hermeneutic through analysis of his sermons and broader writings. Spurgeon "viewed the entire Bible through the lens of the cross, with an aim to bring about the conversion of sinners" (3). Breimaier, a tutor in systematic theology and history at Spurgeon's College in London, shares the fruit of his PhD thesis. He proceeds broadly chronologically through Spurgeon's life and ministry to expose "the overarching themes of crucicentrism and conversionism throughout Spurgeon's preached and written materials" (4).

Chapter 1 examines the early influences of Spurgeon's grandfather and father, both preachers, along with the impact of his mother. His early education fades in importance compared to the central role of Spurgeon's own conversion which became "an idealized pattern that he

attempted to recreate and establish as normative in his own ministry" (32). Chapter 2 continues into Spurgeon's ministry at New Park Street Chapel and its relocation as the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon rejected high Calvinism in his emphasis on the free offer of the gospel. Spurgeon's commentaries, magazine, and devotional writings confirm his insistence on the cross and conversion.

Chapters 3 and 4 form the heart of the book as Breimaier analyzes Spurgeon's preaching from the Old and New Testaments. Just as all roads lead to London, Spurgeon argued that for each biblical verse, "There is a road from here to Jesus Christ" (78). Breimaier summarizes the developments in critical scholarship in the nineteenth century and Spurgeon's interaction with available commentaries. Rather than divert from the flowing narrative of Spurgeon's ministry, these sections situate Spurgeon in his broader context. Breimaier also compares Spurgeon's crucicentrism to his contemporaries, such as J. C. Ryle, Alexander Maclaren, and George MacDonald, to highlight Spurgeon's emphasis on the atonement and conversion.

In chapter 5, he surveys the later years of Spurgeon's ministry, including the Downgrade Controversy. Breimaier emphasizes Spurgeon's commitment to biblical authority. Spurgeon's preaching emphasis remained the salvation of his listeners. Spurgeon's written work affirmed the ongoing themes of the cross and conversion. In an engaging section, Breimaier considers *The Bible and the Newspaper*. Spurgeon matched newspaper headlines from the 1870s with biblical passages. His "interpretations featured the cross and the free offer of the gospel" (190). The Downgrade Controversy threatened the core doctrines of the atonement and plenary inspiration which led to Spurgeon's resignation from the Baptist Union over his defense of these essential doctrines. To the very end of his ministry, Spurgeon considered himself "tethered to the cross" in his crucicentric and conversionistic approach to preaching (206).

The final chapter provides evidence of Spurgeon's commitment to keep the cross central in his training programs including the Pastors' College. By the end of his life, more than half of the Baptist ministers in England and Wales had been trained at the college (219). Spurgeon longed for his students to "Preach Christ in a Christly Manner" (236). His final writings, including *Lectures to My Students* and *The Soul Winner*, echo Spurgeon's constant theme to preach the gospel "and preach nothing else" (238).

Breimaier succeeds in proving Spurgeon's hermeneutical emphasis on the cross and conversion. Every page of the book defends the centrality of the cross in Spurgeon's ministry. Breimaier covers the breadth of Spurgeon's ministry and writings without losing the narrative of Spurgeon's life and central passion. Breimaier provides ample quotations but never leaves the reader bogged down in minutiae. Well-trodden paths in Spurgeon's story feel fresh and vibrant in Breimaier's clear writing. He highlights significant moments and familiar quotations from Spurgeon, but never diverts from his central thesis. Readers witness Spurgeon's snowy conversion as a lay preacher urged him to "Look to

Christ" (35). Spurgeon's defense of the Bible is like defending a lion, "open the door and let the lion out; he will take care of himself" (73). In all preaching opportunities, from the sorrow of "the tragic loss of life in the stampede at the Surrey Gardens Hall" (108) to the enormous crowd at the Crystal Palace, Spurgeon pointed to the cross and pushed for conversion. Gems from Spurgeon's lips and pen abound: "Saints have no hell but what they suffer here on earth; sinners will have no heaven but what they have here in this poor troublous world" (153).

Tethered to the Cross rests on the solid scholarship of Breimaier's dissertation while remaining readable and engaging. The clear, crisp writing moves the reader joyfully into the ministry of Spurgeon. Breimaier's summaries of technical discussions provide the lay reader with sufficient context. The format of each chapter, with a helpful section of conclusions, brings the reader gently along while emphasizing the centrality of the cross and conversion. Breimaier's deep affection for Spurgeon never devolves into hagiography as he willingly identifies weaknesses in Spurgeon's hermeneutic. Spurgeon sometimes ignored the "more straightforward interpretations of the biblical text" (166).

The reader new to Spurgeon will gain a clear understanding of the man and his ministry. The experienced Spurgeon reader will be strengthened by his pulpit passion. Preachers will be encouraged by Spurgeon's devotion to the conversion of his listeners. Even where Breimaier exposes weaknesses in Spurgeon's hermeneutic, the underlying fervor for ministry shines through. *Tethered to the Cross* is a valuable addition to the field of homiletical hermeneutics and provides an engaging entryway into the preaching of Charles Spurgeon.

Kevin D. Koslowsky
Faith Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware

Pastors and Their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in the Ministry, by Joel R. Beeke and Nick Thompson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. 177 pp. \$15.99

Seminary students often entertain romantic ideas about pastoral ministry. They imagine a future marked by successive spiritual victories and only occasional defeats. Sometime after ordination, however, a young pastor discovers that reality is just the opposite! The work is difficult, and the critics are many. In all too many cases, the disconnect between expectation and reality leads to disenchantment, and then disengagement, from the Christian ministry.

Enter this new book by Joel Beeke and Nick Thompson. Beeke is the long-time president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) and a minister in the Heritage Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. Thompson is a recent graduate of PRTS who is pursuing ordination in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Together, these men offer