

# C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): A Lover of France

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## RÉSUMÉ

Cet article retrace les relations de Charles Spurgeon avec la France, expose sa vision pour le progrès de la cause évangélique parmi les francophones, décrit le soutien qu'il a apporté aux baptistes français, et évoque com-

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, ein prominenter Baptist im neunzehnten Jahrhundert, war in den christlichen Gemeinden europaweit sehr bekannt. Doch von allen Ländern Europas, mit denen er Beziehungen pflegte, knüpfte Spurgeon die stärksten Bande mit Frankreich. Die vorliegende Studie untersucht Spurgeons wachsende

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## SUMMARY

This article describes Charles Haddon Spurgeon's relationship with France, his vision for evangelical advance among French-speaking people, his support of French

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## 1. Introduction

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), the most famous Baptist minister of the nineteenth century, was well known to Christian communities across Europe.<sup>1</sup> By 1875 his sermons, the circulation of which reached millions, had been translated into a number of European languages. A special edition of his sermons translated into German was printed for the Leipzig Book Fair of 1861, and in the following decade there were translations into several languages, including French, Dutch and Russian. The sermons in Russian were approved by the Tsarist and the Orthodox Church.<sup>2</sup> Of all the countries in Europe with which he had connections, however, it was with France that

ment Menton est devenu comme un second lieu de résidence pour lui. Il met en lumière certains des traits de caractères de Spurgeon et souligne sa préoccupation pour la classe ouvrière. Il fait ainsi apparaître Spurgeon comme un amoureux de la France.

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Beziehung zu Frankreich, seine Vision für die sich entwickelnde evangelikale Bewegung unter der frankophonen Bevölkerung, seine Unterstützung der französischen Baptisten sowie die Bedeutung dessen, was man als seine „zweite Heimat“ bezeichnen kann, die er in Mentone gefunden hat. Sie vertritt einen Aspekt der Persönlichkeit Spurgeons, welcher noch nicht zuvor untersucht worden war: Spurgeon als ein Liebhaber Frankreichs.

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Baptists and his finding a 'second home' in Mentone. It also shows some of his character traits and his concerns for the working classes. The author thus presents an aspect of Spurgeon that so far had not been investigated: Spurgeon as a lover of France.

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Spurgeon developed the strongest links. Alongside his personal experience of the country, he greatly appreciated the French Huguenot heritage of the past, and he wrote in his *Autobiography*: 'England must have been a poor land until, in entertaining strangers [Huguenots], she entertained angels unawares.' He added: 'the Huguenot blood has had more to do with us than many suppose'.<sup>3</sup> This study examines Spurgeon's developing relationship with France, his vision for evangelical advance among French-speaking people, his support of French Baptists and his sense of finding what can be described as a 'second home' in Mentone. It argues for an aspect of Spurgeon that has not previously been investigated: Spurgeon as a lover of France.



## 2. Early visits to France

C.H. Spurgeon often visited France from 1856 onwards, beginning with Paris. He quickly came to a high opinion of Paris as a European city and that perspective remained with him. In the magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, which he produced from his church in London and which was very widely read, he offered some reflections in 1867 on his experiences of being in Paris. Spurgeon's thoughts about the city came after several visits. He wrote: 'As an educational city Paris is complete; it has large and well-arranged museums of every science and art'. He considered that 'all Europe' could not excel the art of Paris. He recommended, from his experience, museums of zoology, anatomy, geology, botany, agriculture, mining and electricity.<sup>4</sup> It was typical of Spurgeon to investigate all branches of knowledge and to take an educated interest in each place he visited. As an example of his concern for education, he started evening classes in London in 1862 which offered lectures that covered 'the Classics, Mathematics, Natural Science, and all the branches of a liberal English education', and the Pastors' College, the ministerial training institution which Spurgeon founded (later called Spurgeon's College), gave thorough theological and practical training, and at the same time fostered this wider outlook on the world.<sup>5</sup> It was visiting France that helped to broaden Spurgeon's own perspective.

Spurgeon's first visit to France was on his honeymoon, in the spring of 1856, when he was aged twenty-one. Susannah, Spurgeon's wife, had already visited Paris several times, and while learning the French language she had received hospitality for some months in the household of a well-known French Reformed Church pastor, Joel Audebez, Secretary-General of the Société Evangélique of France.<sup>6</sup> Susannah spoke of feeling 'quite at home' in Paris and she was delighted to introduce Charles to the city. The newly-weds stayed in the Hotel Meurice, a suite of rooms having been made available 'by special favour', said Susannah – but she gave no further explanation. Each day they visited museums, churches or art galleries. When they visited the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Susannah was able to boast to Charles that she had been present there among the crowds on the occasion of the marriage of Napoleon III to Eugénie three years before. The beauty of La Sainte Chapelle especially appealed to the Spurgeons, with Charles, who had definite

views about church buildings and church design, finding in it 'a little heaven of stained glass'.<sup>7</sup>

In February 1860 C.H. Spurgeon returned to Paris, this time to preach. He was invited by William Blood, who was then temporary minister of the American Church, Rue de Berri.<sup>8</sup> Holden Pike, who assisted Spurgeon in the editing of *The Sword and the Trowel*, stated in his (six-volume) biography of Spurgeon:

It was understood that the object of the visit to the French metropolis was simply to preach the gospel to the people – to such as understood English; for although Spurgeon could read French, I am not aware that he ever attempted to give an address in that language.<sup>9</sup>

William Blood was aware that Spurgeon's immense popularity was such that he had a diary full of engagements for two years to come, and that he had refused to go to America to speak, despite being offered £20,000 by Americans if he did go: a huge sum which would have made a very significant contribution to the building of the new Metropolitan Tabernacle (Spurgeon's church) in London.<sup>10</sup> However, William Blood knew Spurgeon personally, and had preached for him, and in consequence Spurgeon agreed to come to Paris to give mid-week addresses, with Susannah accompanying him. *Galignani's Messenger*, a Parisian daily paper in English, noted that the visit had to be a mid-week one since it was 'impossible for [Spurgeon] to be absent from the immense congregation of 10,000 persons in London to whom he preaches on Sundays'.<sup>11</sup> At that time Spurgeon was preaching in very large public buildings in London.

Over the course of three days Spurgeon gave five addresses in Paris, in the American Chapel and in the larger Église de l'Oratoire of the Reformed Church of France.<sup>12</sup> This visit was not arranged in connection with the French Baptists, who from 1852 had been suffering considerable repression and difficulty. They were beginning to recover confidence through some active French Baptist pastors and evangelism, however, and Spurgeon's visit also gave them fresh hope.<sup>13</sup> Those who came to hear Spurgeon in Paris in 1860 had connections with various denominations, including Baptists, but the core support for his visit came from leaders in the French Reformed Church (*L'Église Réformée*). Frédéric Monod, a Reformed Church pastor in Paris and editor of the *Archives du Christianisme*, the largest French Protestant



journal, wrote about Spurgeon's preaching in this way in February 1860: 'You are not tempted to applaud and say "Bravo" but you feel constrained to retire into yourself, to pray for yourself and for others, and to say from your heart, "Amen! Lord! Amen!"'<sup>14</sup> Another prominent and respected French Reformed pastor, Jean-Henri Grandpierre, said of the young Spurgeon (he was still only in his mid-twenties): 'I fervently pray that the Holy Spirit may bless ... our brother, Mr. Spurgeon, to the conversion of many souls, and the strengthening of the regenerate in the faith.'<sup>15</sup>

This hope was fulfilled. It seems that conversions took place.<sup>16</sup> Parisians who came to the meetings were impressed by Spurgeon's 'unaffected simplicity and freedom from pride'.<sup>17</sup> Many French evangelicals were encouraged. Grandpierre published a report in *L'Espérance*, speaking of Spurgeon as 'animated by the warmest piety' and as someone from whom 'there seems to shine the sacred fire of the love of souls'. He affirmed: 'One feels that he preaches especially for the salvation of unconverted sinners, and for the strengthening of the faith of those who are regenerate.' For Grandpierre, Spurgeon's theology in his preaching was clear:

He is Calvinistic, incontestably, but moderately so. It was with peculiar satisfaction that we heard him proclaim, from the pulpit of the Oratoire, with a vigour and a clearness equalled only by his eloquence, the perfect Divinity of the Saviour, and redemption by the expiation of His death, the eternal election of the children of God, and other essential points.

Grandpierre added: 'One would willingly hear him for hours at a time.'<sup>18</sup> Frédéric Monod was impressed not only by the public preaching but also by the attitude of Spurgeon in private meetings. On two evenings Grandpierre opened his home to 'numerous friends who desired to be better acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon', and Monod noted that Spurgeon 'seemed not to be aware that he was the one object of interest to all present'.<sup>19</sup> Also, with his concern for students, Spurgeon was pleased to speak to students preparing for overseas service with the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society.<sup>20</sup>

A remarkable article about Spurgeon's visit to Paris appeared in the *Journal des débats*, by Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol, who was its principal leader writer and an acclaimed French journalist. The *Journal des débats* had already noted

Spurgeon's impending arrival.<sup>21</sup> The report by Paradol was later translated into English and published in the Baptist newspaper, *The Freeman*. Although Paradol was a Roman Catholic, he referred to the Protestant Spurgeon as an 'apostle'. The article spoke of Spurgeon's subject matter in preaching as 'often a common one and its development is foreseen; that which cannot be understood before having heard Mr. Spurgeon is the persuasive, familiar, and yet commanding manner' of his addresses, which Paradol saw as drawing the audience to follow closely the 'rich and solid tissues of his discourses'.<sup>22</sup> Paradol was quoted in Spurgeon's *Autobiography* as describing Spurgeon's preaching as 'the most inspired oratory we have ever had the pleasure of hearing'. In Paradol's view 'all disputes concerning religion ought to vanish before such an apostle', whom he saw as 'one of the most happy examples of what modern Christianity and liberty can produce' and with whom it had been 'an honour to come into contact ... and to exchange with him the grasp of friendship'.<sup>23</sup> Spurgeon's early visits to France had a significant impact.

### 3. Broadening connections

On his return home to England after his stay and his meetings in Paris, Spurgeon preached in the Exeter Hall in the Strand in London on the Sunday. Holden Pike commented on Spurgeon's preaching that the

freshness and force with which he treated the subject [of his sermon] would not have led anyone to suppose that he had just gone through such an arduous week's work on the other side of the Channel.<sup>24</sup>

New experiences stimulated Spurgeon, and it is clear he was especially thrilled to have preached for the first time in France. Spurgeon wrote a letter to his French hosts with typically hearty and heartfelt greetings and thanks. He said:

Mon Église a offert au Seigneur ses plus instantes supplications pour la prospérité et l'extension de l'Église de Christ en France. Nous vous porterons désormais sur nos coeurs, et nous espérons occuper aussi une place dans vos prières journalières ... Puis-je répondre toujours aux témoignages d'estime que vous avez bien voulu m'accorder! Je m'incline jusqu'à terre sous le poids des miséricordes dont le Seigneur a daigné me favoriser, et les marques d'affection que me



donnent Ses enfants penètrent mon coeur de gratitude.<sup>25</sup>

Spurgeon would continue to work and pray for the prosperity and extension of the Church of Christ in France.

Later in the same year as he and Susannah made this visit to Paris, C.H. Spurgeon spent a more extended time in mainland Europe, once more with Susannah. His travels offer insights into aspects of Spurgeon's attitude in first-hand encounters with Roman Catholicism. He was, for example, willing to attend a French-speaking Roman Catholic place of worship and, more widely, he appreciated some elements he found in Catholicism that he saw as authentically spiritual.<sup>26</sup> There were, of course, many Roman Catholic beliefs and practices that he strongly condemned, but he wrote affirmatively of a Sunday service he attended in Brussels:

I heard a good sermon in a Romish Church. The place was crowded with people, many of them standing ... and I stood, too; and the good priest, for I believe he is a good man, preached the Lord Jesus with all his might. He spoke of the love of Christ, so that I, a very poor hand at the French language, could fully understand him, and my heart kept beating within me as he told of the beauties of Christ and the preciousness of His blood, and of His power to save the chief of sinners.

Spurgeon noted that in his sermon the priest did not use the phrase 'justification by faith', but that he did talk of the 'efficacy of the blood', which for Spurgeon came to 'much the same thing'.<sup>27</sup> Spurgeon felt a similar affinity with Roman Catholic authors of 'deeply spiritual' books of devotion: he found in their writings a sense of 'fellowship in the precious blood, and in the risen life of our Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>28</sup>

For a Protestant there were certainly some objectionable sentences in the Catholic sermon which Spurgeon heard in Brussels, but Spurgeon said that despite this he could have gone to the preacher and told him, 'Brother, you have spoken the truth', and he commented that if he had been handling the same biblical text he would have treated it in the same way as the priest did, 'if I could have done it as well'.<sup>29</sup> This was indeed high praise. Spurgeon was moved by genuine spiritual life, in whatever branch of Christian tradition he found it.

From the experience of French-speaking Catholicism in Brussels, Charles and Susannah

made their way to Geneva, where the Reformed Church theologian Jean-Henri Merle d'Aubigné, who did much to foster evangelical unity in Europe, had invited Spurgeon to preach – from what had been John Calvin's pulpit.<sup>30</sup> This was probably the only time that Spurgeon preached in a gown. His comment relates to his sense of having recently been in a Catholic context:

I did not feel very happy when I came out in full canonicals, but the request was put to me in such a beautiful way that I could have worn the Pope's tiara if by so doing I could have preached the Gospel more freely.

Before he left Geneva he was presented with a medal that had Calvin's likeness on one side and on the other the text, 'He endured as seeing Him who is invisible'. Spurgeon confessed that when he 'saw this medal bearing the venerated likeness of John Calvin' he immediately (in somewhat Catholic fashion) kissed it.<sup>31</sup>

From Geneva, the Spurgeons went to Chamouin, and they then crossed the Alps. They accepted the hospitality of a community of monks living up the mountain, and afterwards Spurgeon recounted that it had pleased him to find that they were Augustinian monks, because of his admiration of Augustine.<sup>32</sup> Spurgeon commented that 'next to Calvin I love Augustine'. He felt that the Augustinian monks, in their acts of charity, seemed to say: 'Our Master was a teacher of grace, and we will practise it, and give to all comers whatsoever they shall need, without money and without price.' 'Those monks', Spurgeon continued,

are worthy of great honour; there they are spending the best and noblest period of their lives on the top of a bleak and barren mountain. ... They go out in the cold nights and bring in those that are frostbitten; they dig them out from under the snow, simply that they may serve God by helping their fellow-men. I pray God to bless the good works of these monks of the Augustinian Order.<sup>33</sup>

This eight-week tour of Europe in 1860, with its many striking experiences, remained a vivid memory for Spurgeon. Further European journeys were to follow in succeeding years, with France being the most common destination for Charles and Susannah Spurgeon.

#### 4. Baptists in France

During the 1860s C.H. Spurgeon gained more



awareness of the situation of Baptists in France. In 1861 he visited the Baptist church in Rue St Roch in Paris. He had difficulty finding the church, but once he was there he was impressed by the fact that the Baptists were a predominantly working-class congregation. In his view the work of God was more long-lasting if it began among the poor.<sup>34</sup> In 1867 he was again in Paris and on this occasion he was more critical of Rue St Roch, writing in *The Sword and the Trowel*:

We visited our French Baptist brethren in the obscure, out-of-the-way, and dirty room at the back of the church of [Rue] St Roch. We sincerely wish they would come out of that cave of Adullam.

He spoke of the lack of fresh air in the meeting room, which was (he commented) a special problem for some people who 'maintain the dangerous luxury of a nose'.<sup>35</sup> Spurgeon was always sensitive to lack of air. In the same year as this Paris trip, he went to Hamburg, Germany, to preach at the opening of a new building for the large Baptist congregation where his friend Johann Oncken was minister. Spurgeon also lamented the Hamburg building's poor ventilation. He was sure that 'unventilated, cave-like churches' were responsible for many fevers and deaths. He was delighted, however, that 'God has done a great work in this land [Germany]'.<sup>36</sup>

There were also encouragements in France. An American Baptist Missionary Union report of 1863 spoke about steady Baptist growth in Paris.<sup>37</sup> But Spurgeon noted that a visitor still had to 'turn into a little courtyard and up a winding pair of stairs' before finding the Baptist church notice board. Spurgeon commented: 'The church of God in this case is not a city set upon a hill, but a hamlet hidden in a hole'.<sup>38</sup>

It might be thought that in making these comments Spurgeon was not sufficiently aware of the way Protestants had been persecuted in France. This history had contributed to their lack of visibility. However, he did know the Huguenot story well. On the other hand, he did not seem to take sufficient account of the recent restrictions French Baptists had suffered. For example, the Rue St Roch congregation was not allowed to have anything other than their small notice board because of the proximity of its meeting place to the Catholic Saint-Roch Church.<sup>39</sup> Spurgeon, in typically robust fashion, argued that the Baptists of the 1860s would be spiritual heroes if they were

persecuted. He compared the small number of Baptists in Paris with his own huge Metropolitan Tabernacle (which had by now been built), with its thousands of members, and then went on to maintain that if the Tabernacle members were as few in number as the Parisian Baptists they would nevertheless take the view that preaching should be taking place in a large hall in Paris or in the Champs-Élysées. The comparison is hardly a fair one – it does not, for example, show an understanding of the 'spiritual psychology' of a tiny minority – but for Spurgeon the Baptists in Paris at that time needed to exchange their 'peaceful obscurity' for more 'courageous enterprise'. Although he acknowledged that the Baptist 'pastors and evangelists are indefatigable in their visitations and ministrations', he went on to say that 'it would give us unfeigned satisfaction to see a portion of the tremendous energy of our brother Oncken, of Hamburg, infused into them'.<sup>40</sup>

There was ongoing American financial support for the French Baptists in this period. American Baptists had been interested, as they put it, in 'attempting to diffuse' in France 'the blessings of an enlightened Christianity'.<sup>41</sup> Spurgeon wanted more funds to be available for Baptist advance, although he admitted that the Congregationalists and Wesleyans in Paris were spending more on their mission work but were not seeing much result. He spoke about funds that were in hand for a large Baptist chapel in Paris, but noted that 'the amount is scarcely a fourth of what will be required'. On the positive side, he reported that French Baptists who had previously been Roman Catholics created interest through their testimonies: there was persistent French anti-Protestant prejudice, but there was the possibility of witness. 'There appears to be among the French working classes', Spurgeon suggested – exhibiting his consistent concern for the working classes –

a considerable amount of religiousness of a hopeful kind. They do not much frequent the churches or reverence the priests; they make a distinction between the church and religion, and prefer to be religious in their own way. The story of the love of Jesus is generally received with respectful tenderness, and evangelical truth, if not distinctly styled "Protestantism", usually commands a hearing.<sup>42</sup>

In the light of Spurgeon's comments in the 1860s about the need for a much larger Baptist building in Paris, he was pleased to publish in *The*



*Sword and the Trowel* in 1871 a letter from James Benham, of Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London, which reported that money had now been raised to buy ground at 48 Rue de Lille, Paris. The plan was to build a chapel to seat 550 people. Spurgeon urged support for the cause: 'We most earnestly commend the case of our dear Paris brethren to the sympathy of the Lord's stewards. We have worshipped with them and enjoyed their simple fervour.'<sup>43</sup> He did not repeat his previous criticisms, as he was now intent on encouraging support for the venture he had wanted to see happen. The Paris church, under the leadership of Pastor Alexandre Dez, took advantage of the opportunities open to them, and a large, elegant building in Rue de Lille was built, and opened in September 1873. It was immediately recognisable to passers-by as a church building. As well as the main hall for worship there were rooms for smaller meetings and for Sunday school classes. This massive step forward for Baptists in Paris, and indeed for Protestants in general, was seen as having been possible because of American help and British assistance, in particular that of Spurgeon.<sup>44</sup>

Although Spurgeon was encouraged by the Baptist progress in Paris and other parts of France the early 1870s, he was also deeply aware of the struggles of the French nation. The Franco-Prussian war in 1870-71, in which many Frenchmen were killed, was followed by the uprising of working people in Paris after France's defeat in the war. In January 1872 Spurgeon reported on the deep sadness he felt after visiting Paris and seeing the devastation caused by the uprising. He commented: 'The madness of the hour spared nothing on account of its sacredness, patriotic associations, antiquity or usefulness (serviceableness).'<sup>45</sup> He saw the bullet-holes in Paris as a warning to London that it needed to embark on reform and not assume that it could keep the poor in poverty without some reaction happening. Spurgeon attacked the so-called 'law of supply and demand' in the labour market which kept down wages, arguing that it was 'no law of God, but the reverse'. He called for proper provision for the poor, both economically and in terms of education. 'The Ragged-schools', he stated, referring to education for poor children, 'must go on till none are ragged'.<sup>46</sup> His reflections were entitled 'Paris and London'.

In this period Spurgeon's travels in mainland Europe meant that his interest in developments in Baptist life across the continent grew.<sup>47</sup> This

included continuing interest in France but also in Baptists in other Latin countries. The Pastors' College report for 1871 stated that the College expected 'to receive a Portuguese evangelist for a time, and probably one or two young men from Rome'.<sup>48</sup> It seems possible, however, that they did only short courses. Language may have been a problem. In the following year Spurgeon visited Rome, a city which seems to have captivated him in much the same way as did Paris, and he spent time with Baptists who were working there. He was very aware of the problems of speaking through an interpreter, commenting. It is as murderous to all oratory as the old method of lining out the hymn was deadly to all music.' Spurgeon was inspired by the work of James Wall, an English Baptist minister who had felt a call to Italy. Wall had sold his furniture in England to cover costs incurred by himself and his family. Spurgeon, moved by what he saw, said:

If we had to choose our life-work, we would prefer to labour in Rome. It is a clear site, no other man's foundation is there, and he who is first at work will be the architect of the future.<sup>49</sup>

Two students of the Pastors' College went to Spain, and Spurgeon hoped in 1873 that a 'noble army' of missionaries like them would go from the College.<sup>50</sup> Spurgeon also came to know a future influential Baptist leader, Reuben Saillens, who studied at the inter-denominational East London Missionary Training Institute under Gratton Guinness in 1873-74, before taking up significant ministry in Paris, initially with the McAll Mission.<sup>51</sup>

## 5. Spurgeon and Mentone

From 1872, Spurgeon's visits to France led him to the south of the country much more often than to the capital. From his mid-thirties, Spurgeon's health was not strong – he had chronic kidney disease and also suffered from depression – and he found it helped him to spend time in the winter in the French Riviera. From 1872 to his death in 1892, he made regular winter visits to Mentone, which is close to Monaco and was a very popular British holiday destination. He usually stayed a month, but sometimes as long as three months.<sup>52</sup> His brother, James Archer Spurgeon, was appointed co-pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and covered during Charles' absences. As well as gaining benefit from the Mediterranean weather, Spurgeon also enjoyed Christian fellow-



ship with other visitors to Mentone. A volume of Spurgeon's addresses at Communion, *Till He Come*, notes that a number of these were delivered to 'the little companies of Christians, - of different denominations, and of various nationalities, - who gathered around the communion table in Mr. Spurgeon's sitting room at Mentone'.<sup>53</sup> The sitting room was in his hotel, normally the Beau Rivage. Spurgeon valued interdenominational fellowship and simple celebration of the Lord's Supper. In one address at Mentone he stated:

In this room we have an example of how closely we are united in Christ. ... Our union in one body as Episcopalians, Baptists, Presbyterians or Independents, is not the thing which our Lord prayed for: but our union in Himself. That union we do at this moment enjoy; and therefore do we eat of one bread, and drink of one Spirit.<sup>54</sup>

These Communion addresses by Spurgeon at Mentone indicate his wide sympathies. The Communion sermons by the seventeenth-century Scottish Presbyterian, Samuel Rutherford, said Spurgeon, 'have a sacred unction on them'. He also appreciated 'the canticles of holy Bernard' (of Clairvaux), describing how they 'flame with devotion'.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, Spurgeon considered that some beliefs about Communion were wholly unacceptable. 'The Romish church', he commented in one of his Mentone addresses, 'says much more about the *real* presence; meaning thereby, the corporeal presence of the Lord Jesus'. Spurgeon's reply was: 'Nay, you believe in knowing Christ after the flesh, and in that sense the only real presence is in heaven; but we firmly believe in the real presence of Christ which is spiritual and yet certain'.<sup>56</sup> But above all the Lord's Supper was for Spurgeon a place of meeting with Christ. Speaking at Mentone on the subject 'I will give you rest', Spurgeon said:

By faith, I see our Lord standing in our midst, and I hear Him say, with voice of sweetest music, first to all of us together, and then to each one individually, 'I will give you rest.' May the Holy Spirit bring to each of us the fullness of the rest and peace of God!<sup>57</sup>

Spurgeon's Mentone talks show clearly his high view of the Lord's Supper, his delight in having weekly Communion and his sense of rest and renewal.

Mentone also enriched Spurgeon through the people he met there. He found conversation with

others spiritually stimulating. Among those with whom Spurgeon had fellowship at Mentone was George Müller, a German who became known for his remarkable ministry to orphans in Bristol. Müller's work, in Spurgeon's view, was a 'romance of Christian confidence in God in this prosaic, unbelieving, nineteenth century'.<sup>58</sup> When the second edition of the account of Müller's wider ministry was published in 1889, Spurgeon commended the book and commented:

It was a great means of grace to hear and see our friend, some ten years ago, at Mentone. It was not only his word, but the man himself that spoke to our heart; for he has tried and proved the promises of God.

For Spurgeon, Müller's ministry was 'a reflection of the Acts of the Apostles'.<sup>59</sup>

When in Mentone Spurgeon also supported the work of the local Presbyterian Church and he would occasionally preach there. In 1890 he publicised the need for a new place of worship for the Mentone Presbyterians.<sup>60</sup> Mentone offered him continued opportunities to support Christian work in France and beyond.

In 1875 Spurgeon wrote an extended description of Mentone under the heading, 'Our Winter Retreat'. He covered the varied ways in which the town appealed to him. At times what he wrote sounded like a tourist brochure. He spoke about how someone

may spend five weeks at the best hotel, and after paying the railway fares of both going and returning, will find that he has not expended more in the whole time of his absence from home than it would have cost him to reside in a corresponding hotel in Brighton.<sup>61</sup>

Others could go to Nice or Monaco, but Spurgeon enjoyed the 'quiet and repose' of Mentone. He even bought a few terraces on the mountain side about a mile from Mentone and employed a gardener to establish a winter garden. With his customary enthusiasm, he found out a great deal about gardening in southern Europe.<sup>62</sup> A sermon he preached in 1879 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on 'The Beauty of the Olive Tree' was replete with references to Mentone. Most of these spoke of the beauty of the olives in Mentone, although Spurgeon also noted that the happiness of a Christian believer was longer-lasting than 'the anemones and wild tulips which grow in such profusion on the terraces of Mentone'.<sup>63</sup> The times in Mentone did Spurgeon good, although even



there he was not free from pain, both physical and mental. Spurgeon was quite open about his mental suffering. In 1885 he wrote to his London congregation from Mentone to say that he was experiencing 'fits of deep depression', the result of 'brain weariness'.<sup>64</sup> Spurgeon died while in Mentone, in 1892.

## 6. Conclusion

It is clear that from his first visit to Paris, in 1856, Spurgeon found France fascinating. His introduction to Paris came from Susannah. From the 1860s, Spurgeon clearly wanted to respond to the spiritual needs of France and to offer support to French evangelicals. This vision never left him. He was also glad when he found elements in Roman Catholic life with which he had sympathy. Right to the end of his life, he maintained a concern for Christian witness in France. For their part, French evangelicals looked to him for inspiration. Ruben Saillens recommended young members of his Paris church who spoke English to study at the Pastors' College, London. They offered to give French lessons to members and friends of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in exchange for board and lodgings.<sup>65</sup> In 1891, a year before he died, Spurgeon was delighted to feature an encouraging report by Saillens regarding positive features of French Baptist life. Saillens reported on French Baptist growth which had been taking place from the late 1880s, with new churches being planted and congregations increasing. Of particular interest to Spurgeon was the fact that Alfred Barley, who had trained at the Pastors' College and been a pastor in England, was then working with the French Baptist Union.<sup>66</sup>

This study has argued that C.H. Spurgeon had a life-long interest in and love for France, a country in which he and Susannah had their honeymoon, which he visited many times, in which he died, and which can be seen as his second home.

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## Endnotes

1 I am grateful to the French Baptist Historical Society for the invitation to give their annual lecture on the topic 'Spurgeon and France'. I was delighted to be able to give this lecture in Paris, a city Spurgeon loved.

- 2 See Peter J. Morden, 'Communion with Christ and his people': *The Spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon* (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2010) 7-8.
- 3 See C.H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography: Compiled from his Diary, Letters and Records by his Wife and his Private Secretary*, 4 Volumes (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897-99) 1, chapter 2, 10.
- 4 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1867, 73.
- 5 *The Sword and the Trowel*, April 1870, 150.
- 6 For Pastor Audebez, see the *Annual Reports of the American Tract Society and the Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* for the 1830s and 1840s.
- 7 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 2, 176-177.
- 8 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.344.
- 9 G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 6 Volumes (London, Paris & Melbourne: Cassell & Company, 1894), Vol. II, 330. It seems that Spurgeon might have given brief remarks in French while in Paris.
- 10 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.344.
- 11 *Galignani's Messenger*, quoted in *The British Standard*, 6 January 1860, cited by Pike, *Life and Work*, II.329.
- 12 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.344-345.
- 13 Sébastien Fath, *Une autre manière d'être chrétien en France. Socio-histoire de l'implantation baptiste (1810-1950)* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2001) 175.
- 14 *Archives de Christianisme*, 20 February 1860, translated for *The British Standard*, 9 March 1860, cited by Pike, *Life and Work*, II.340.
- 15 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.345.
- 16 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.346-347; Pike, *Life and Work*, II.342.
- 17 Pike, *Life and Work*, II.341.
- 18 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.348.
- 19 Pike, *Life and Work*, II.341.
- 20 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.350. For background, see Jean-François Zorn, *Le grand siècle d'une mission protestante: la Mission de Paris, 1822-1914* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).
- 21 *Journal des débats*, 5 February 1860, 2.
- 22 Translated and quoted in *The Freeman*, 14 March 1860, from the *Journal des débats*, and cited in Pike, *Life and Work*, II.342-343.
- 23 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.350.
- 24 Pike, *Life and Work*, II.343.
- 25 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2.351.
- 26 See Morden, 'Communion with Christ and his people', 168-172.
- 27 Charles Ray, *The Life of C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903) 262. Ray also wrote the life of Mrs Spurgeon.
- 28 C.H. Spurgeon, 'Communion with Christ and His People', in 'Till He Come': *Communion Meditations and Addresses by C.H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894) 324.



- 29 Ray, *Life of C.H. Spurgeon*, 262.
- 30 Merle d'Aubigné was central to the organisation of an Evangelical Alliance international conference in Geneva in 1861. See I.M. Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001) 30, 161.
- 31 Ray, *Life of C.H. Spurgeon*, 262-263.
- 32 For Spurgeon's indebtedness to Augustine, among other writers, see Morden, 'Communion with Christ and his people', 20, 110, 132.
- 33 Ray, *Life of C.H. Spurgeon*, 263-264.
- 34 C.H. Spurgeon, 'A Sabbath in Paris', *The Baptist Magazine*, February 1862, 85-89.
- 35 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1867, 73.
- 36 *The Sword and the Trowel*, September 1867, 424-425.
- 37 *Forty-ninth Annual Report*, American Baptist Missionary Union (Boston), May 1863, 96.
- 38 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1867, 73.
- 39 Fath, *Une autre manière d'être chrétien en France*, 191.
- 40 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1867, 74. For Oncken and German Baptist work see I.M. Randall, "'Every Apostolic Church a Mission Society': European Baptist Origins and Identity" in A. R. Cross (ed.), *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H. Y. Briggs* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002) 281-301.
- 41 *The American Baptist Missionary Magazine* (Boston) 12 (1832) 329; cf. I.M. Randall, "'The Blessings of an Enlightened Christianity': North American Involvement in European Baptist Origins", *American Baptist Quarterly* 20.1 (2001) 5-26.
- 42 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1867, 74-75.
- 43 *The Sword and the Trowel*, December 1871, 35-36.
- 44 Fath, *Une autre manière d'être chrétien en France*, 234.
- 45 *The Sword and the Trowel*, January 1872, 5.
- 46 *The Sword and the Trowel*, January 1872, 8, 10.
- 47 For these European Baptist developments, see I.M. Randall, *Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginnings in Europe* (Prague: European Baptist Federation, 2009).
- 48 *Annual Paper of the Pastors' College*, 1871, 7.
- 49 *The Sword and the Trowel*, January 1872, 35; cf. I.M. Randall, "'The World is our Parish': Spurgeon's College and World Mission" in I.M. Randall and A.R. Cross (eds), *Baptists and Mission* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007) 64-77.
- 50 *The Sword and the Trowel*, March 1873, 131; April 1873, 149.
- 51 Fath, *Une autre manière d'être chrétien en France*, 609.
- 52 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4.198. I am grateful to Rod Badams for his help in clarifying the dates of Spurgeon's journeys and for copies of lists of guests staying at hotels in Mentone.
- 53 'Till He Come', Preface.
- 54 'The Well-beloved', in 'Till He Come', 113.
- 55 'The Well-beloved's Vineyard', in 'Till He Come', 149.
- 56 'Mysterious Visits', in 'Till He Come', 17.
- 57 'I will Give you Rest', in 'Till He Come', 197.
- 58 *The Sword and the Trowel*, March 1884, 141.
- 59 *The Sword and the Trowel*, October 1889, 576: Review of S.G. Müller, *The Preaching Tours and Missionary Labours of George Müller, of Bristol* (2nd ed., London, 1889).
- 60 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1890, 92.
- 61 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1975, 52.
- 62 *The Sword and the Trowel*, February 1875, 53, 56.
- 63 C.H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1855-1917, including the *New Park Street Pulpit* volumes), Vol. 55, 'The Beauty of the Olive Tree' (Hosea 14:6): A sermon published on Thursday, December 16, 1909, delivered by C.H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Thursday Evening, April 17, 1879, 3.
- 64 Morden, 'Communion with Christ and his people', 261.
- 65 *The Sword and the Trowel*, August 1895, 447.
- 66 *The Sword and the Trowel*, May 1891, 241-243.