

Biblical Commentaries as Prose

Timothy Larsen

*T*he Victorian biblical commentary has been woefully and unjustly neglected. This lacuna is due primarily to the incomprehension or disdain of modern scholars. It is in stark contrast to the view of the Victorians themselves. In the nineteenth century, authors viewed writing a biblical commentary as an effective way – sometimes even the ideal way – to change religious opinion in society at large. Likewise, readers often found biblical commentaries to be exciting, even potentially explosive, works. These convictions about the genre were widely held across the religious and skeptical spectrum.

E.B. Pusey (1800-82) may serve as an opening example.¹ A High Church Anglican priest, Pusey was such a central figure for the Tractarian movement that it was often referred to as “Puseyism.” His religious thought therefore continues to be of deep interest to scholars. Nevertheless, one would hardly come away from these studies with the realization that Pusey himself gave his life to writing biblical commentaries and thought of these works not merely as scholarly achievements but rather as the primary way he could lead the British people in the right direction. No scholar has ever discussed Pusey’s *Minor Prophets, with a Commentary explanatory and practical and introductions to the several books* (which appears in parts from 1860 to 1877).² Pusey’s Victorian biographer, however, rightly observed that these volumes – and the wider commentary series of which he hoped they would form a part – were “the most cherished project of his life.”³ Pusey’s *Daniel the Prophet* (1864) was so clearly at the center of Victorian debates that scholars have not been able simply to ignore it, but they have nevertheless been quite willing to just bat it away dismissively.

The most egregious example is an article by the late Colin Matthew. Its tendentious subtitle says it all: "From Scholar to Tractarian."⁴ Matthew, of course, was one of the most eminent historians of his generation, a status recognized in his being appointed as the first editor of one of the most ambitious and important projects of the last fifty years, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. In that article, it was Matthew's intent to make the case that Pusey's later work was not scholarly. His main foil is Pusey's *Daniel*. Alas, it is apparent that Matthew never bothered to read this volume before denouncing and dismissing it. His citations from *Daniel the Prophet* are confined exclusively to the preface. Matthew claims that Pusey's slide downward from the integrity of his Broad Church youth "concluded with his response to Darwinism and theological liberalism in his notorious commentary on the Book of Daniel in 1864."⁵ "Notorious" is an effort to substitute an assertion that is as unfocused as it is prejudicial for a demonstration. Moreover, Pusey nowhere mentions Darwinism in the book and it is simply wrong to aver that he saw this study as in any way a response to Darwinism. Matthew must have thrown this in either as a guess regarding the contents of a book he had not read or as an easy (albeit erroneous) way to strengthen the impression that Pusey's book revealed him to be an obscurantist. In actuality, it was an up-to-date, formidable piece of scholarship that even hostile reviewers conceded was so persuasive in its marshaling and sifting of evidence as to be unanswerable. For the purpose at hand, what is particularly telling is that Pusey and the Victorian public both assumed that the best way to answer the theological liberalism of the much-discussed *Essays and Reviews* was with a 628-page technical commentary on a single book of the Old Testament. Even the snide label of "notorious" tacitly concedes a level of excitement and energy invested in and around this commentary project in its nineteenth century context, which scholars have failed fully to appreciate let alone recapture in their depictions of the period.

Nor should it be imagined that only theological conservatives wrote and read commentaries. *Essays and Reviews*, although it did not

engage in the actual work of biblical studies, was a programmatic volume that was preoccupied with the right way to undertake this task. The most famous quotation from it is Benjamin Jowett's dictum: "Interpret the Scripture like any other book."⁶ Moreover, Jowett (1817-1893), although he was widely considered one of the most theologically liberal priests in England, was not merely theorizing. Jowett's own most important religious work was a biblical commentary, *The Epistles of St Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans* (1855; second edition 1859). Just as Pusey hoped that his *Minor Prophets* would form one part of a team effort to reshape Victorian society, so Jowett's volume was intended to be part of a Pauline commentary series from a Broad Church perspective that would set Britons on a more promising spiritual and intellectual track. Far from being received as a dull and dutiful tome, Jowett's commentary generated a heated public debate in which it was assumed that by writing a commentary Jowett was providing substantial religious leadership to the British people – for good or ill.⁷

One of the greatest religious controversies in nineteenth-century England was centered upon John William Colenso (1814-1883), bishop of Natal. In 1866, his metropolitan, Robert Gray, the bishop of Cape Town, declared a sentence of excommunication against him. (While the courts later found that this was not legally binding due to a technicality, the archbishop of Canterbury and the other bishops generally maintained that it was spiritually binding nonetheless.) Colenso thus appears to have the peculiar distinction of being the only Church of England bishop to receive a sentence of excommunication in at least the last three hundred years. Tellingly, the charges of heresy against him were based entirely on biblical commentaries that he had written, *St Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated, and Explained from a Missionary Point of View* (1861) and *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (the first part of which appeared in 1862).⁸

It is worth exploring the contents of the first of these commentaries in some detail by way of illustrating how the commentary was thought of

as a genre that could be used to champion a theological revolution. The key to Colenso's *Romans* is its objectification of the work of Christ in relationship to human beings, and the universalization of the scope of its application, under the umbrella of the Fatherhood of God toward all humanity. The benefits of the gospel have already been freely applied to all: "under the new covenant of the Grace of God in the Gospel, all human beings were declared to be accepted before God."⁹ This stance, of course, has implications for numerous doctrines. On justification: "the justification here spoken of extends to *all*, to those who have never heard the name of Christ, and who cannot have exercised a living faith in Christ, as well as to Christians."¹⁰ Indeed, Colenso treats Romans 5:18 as the theological center of the epistle, a verse that he translates thus: "So then, just as through one fault, *it passed* unto all men, unto condemnation, so also, through one righteous act, *it passed* unto all men, unto justification of life."¹¹ "All" receiving justification being the salient point.

Other doctrines implicated include original sin: "the whole human race are looked upon and dealt with as righteous creatures, in Jesus Christ their Head. The curse of their sinful nature has been taken away altogether.... The whole human race is made righteous, and released from any fear of judgment on this account."¹² Naturally, such a theological vision was more easily found in some portions of scripture than others. On Romans 8:14 the bishop was reduced to asserting, "St. Paul does not say, 'All, who are being *led* by God's Spirit, *they*, and none other, are the sons of God.'"¹³

One of the more counter-intuitive of Colenso's universalizing maneuvers – and one particularly annoying to High Churchmen – was his treatment of the Eucharist, of which he averred:

all men are everywhere partaking, through God's mercy, and so receiving all the life they have, as redeemed creatures, whether they feed upon it by living faith or not, whether they know the precious gift of God's grace or not, whether they heed or disregard it.¹⁴

Thus, on the strength of these words, Colenso's view of the benefit that comes to believers when they receive the sacrament was somewhat mischievously summarized at his trial: "they do not cease at that moment to be partakers of the food which every other moment of their lives they are receiving from God."¹⁵

This inclusive approach did not mean that human beings were exempt from divine judgment. Penalties did not await individuals on account of original sin, but people would receive punishment, according to the bishop of Natal, for willful transgressions of what they knew to be right. However, he suspected that punishments beyond the grave were not retributive but only remedial. Such a view led on to his innovative approach to the subject of future states. Colenso began by renouncing the traditional view:

I now declare that I can no longer maintain, or give utterance to, the doctrine of the endlessness of "future punishments," – that I dare not dogmatise at all on this matter, – that I can only lay my hand upon my mouth and leave it in the hands of the righteous and merciful Judge. But I see that the word "eternal" does not mean "endless." And, for such reasons as the following, I entertain the "hidden hope" that there are remedial processes, when this life is ended, of which at present we know nothing, but which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will administer, as He in His Wisdom shall see to be good.¹⁶

The wording of this passage turned out to be something of a gift for Colenso's critics. The archdeacon of George observed at his trial that the bishop of Natal "no sooner put his hand upon his mouth than he takes it down again, and inculcates naked Universalism."¹⁷ A leading Methodist, George Osborn, observed dryly in the *London Review*, "he calls it the 'hidden hope,' but in what sense it is 'hidden' we have no idea."¹⁸ Lewis Grout, who was serving in Natal under the auspices of the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions when Colenso published his

Romans, had a point when he argued, “And yet the condition and prospects of man beyond the grave are points on which he seems to have felt the deepest, to have labored the hardest, in[deed] that for which he would seem to have written the book.”¹⁹ It is certainly fair to say that, far from shying away from this subject, Colenso actually explores it enthusiastically and at length. The conclusion of all this labor is the suggestion that hell is actually only purgatory; in other words, that all people might ultimately be admitted into the presence of God after having undergone a period of remedial punishment.

Colenso also made a point of rejecting substitutionary atonement:

Once for all let it be stated distinctly, there is not a single passage in the whole of the New Testament, which supports the dogma of modern theology, that our Lord died for our sins, in the sense of dying *instead of* us, dying *in our place*, or dying so as to *bear the punishment or penalty* of our sins.... And the truth is that our Blessed Lord certainly, whatever he did, did *not* “*die in our stead*.”²⁰

Likewise he repeatedly attacked Calvinism.²¹ Colenso’s sympathetic Victorian biographer sanguinely declared that his *Romans* destroyed for all time “the tyranny of the Westminster Confession.”²²

The bishop of Natal’s attack on Calvinism was central to his alternative reading of *Romans*, a reading that was based on applying teaching regarding the inclusion of Gentiles into salvation history to unchristianized people as well. For example, his exposition of *Romans* 2:26, which he translated as, “If, then, the Uncircumcision keep the requirements of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned as circumcision?” was, “If, then, an unbaptized heathen does that which is good and right and true, shall not his unbaptized state be reckoned for baptism?”²³ All these stances, of course, reflected a Romanticist perspective, a sensibility that was typical of liberal churchmen, especially those, like Colenso, who stood intellectually in the Coleridgean tradition. The bishop of Natal felt in his bones that doctrines

such as endless punishment, substitutionary atonement, and double predestination could not be true, ought not to be true: they were wrong and therefore it was revolting to teach them; they were revolting and therefore wrong.

In short, it is readily apparent that Colenso viewed writing a commentary on the apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans as a way of articulating an entire liberal Anglican theological scheme of sin and salvation and of leading others into such a bold vision for the first time. He thought this was the work of a New Reformation, and he continued pursuing it in the same vein by adopting immediately as his next project a multi-volume commentary on the first six books of Old Testament. Colenso forthrightly claimed that his aim was to influence the thinking of ordinary lay people. In the event, the first part of *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* created a national furor. The Bishop of Natal himself had no doubt the genre of the biblical commentary had momentous power: "I am printing Part II.... One thing I am resolved on to go steadily forward with my book, whatever may be the consequences. The movement, however, is begun which will end, I cannot doubt, in a revolution of the English Church."²⁴ Thus he saw works in this genre as so potent as to be capable of inciting a national upheaval.

A particularly striking illustration of the thesis of this article is that even freethinkers and atheists sometimes decided that the biblical commentary was the most exciting and effective genre in which to work. The most prominent and celebrated leader of organized atheism in Victorian Britain was Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891). Bradlaugh was the founding and long-serving president of the most important organization in the movement, the National Secular Society. If he was not already, he certainly became a household name during his ultimately successful struggle to become the first openly atheistic Member of Parliament.²⁵ Bradlaugh's memory is still honored today in numerous ways ranging from a public statue to a public house and apparently there continues to be an annual marking of his birthday. Nevertheless, most of those today who think of him as one of their heroes would be surprised to

learn that he gave his most sustained intellectual labor as an atheist to writing a biblical commentary. Bradlaugh was raised in a humble family with a modest income before the days of state schools and he therefore had scant formal education. He became a freethinker as a teenager which was so dramatic and disruptive a stance to take that he was forced to leave the family home at the age of sixteen. His response to his newfound skeptical convictions was to write a critical commentary on the first four books of the New Testament, "Examination of the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John with Remarks on the life and death of the meek & lowly Jesus." This effort, however, was never published.²⁶ As a mature thinker, Bradlaugh turned his attention to the Old Testament. He was so committed to this endeavor that he patiently and painstakingly mastered Hebrew. (How many atheist leaders today would think that the training needed to best promote their cause would be learning an ancient language?) The result was *The Bible: What It Is*. His original plan was to write a commentary of the entire Bible under this title. (It should be observed that a foundational text for British freethought, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, is itself essentially a critical commentary on the entire Bible and, as such, proceeds through the scriptures in canonical order.) As Bradlaugh continued his research, however, ever more detailed work narrowed the scope. In 1870, a 434-page version of *The Bible: What It Is* appeared. It was a commentary on the Pentateuch. In 1882, Bradlaugh published a 346-page edition that was a commentary of just the book of Genesis. Bradlaugh's modern biographer, David Tribe, was sympathetic to his subject and wrote as a Secularist insider (Tribe himself served as a later successor to Bradlaugh as president of the National Secular Society). Tribe rightly describes *The Bible: What It Is* as Bradlaugh's "*magnum opus*."²⁷

This level of interest in biblical commentaries across the religious and irreligious spectrum belies attempts to dismiss evangelical biblical commentaries as dry and dutiful tomes. Let us therefore now turn to the evangelical Baptist minister, C.H. Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the age. As with Bradlaugh, the work of Spurgeon that is standardly

referred to as his *magnum opus* is a biblical commentary, in Spurgeon's case one on the Psalms entitled *The Treasury of David*. A mammoth seven-volume work, it took him twenty-one years of intense, time-consuming labor to complete it. In addition to his own exposition of all one hundred and fifty psalms, Spurgeon also included a catena of quotations from other expositors from across the centuries, as well as from literary authors whose thoughts illuminated the subject in hand. This gleaning was done entirely without consideration of the personal religious views of the authors: he quotes Pusey, Keble, and Newman; he quotes German higher critics such as Henrich Ewald and Wilhelm De Wette; he quotes an English Unitarian, J.R. Beard, other liberal Nonconformists such as Samuel Davidson and Thomas Toke Lynch, and liberal Anglicans including Thomas Arnold and A.P. Stanley; he quotes numerous Jewish texts and authors (including Moses Maimonides and Ibn Ezra); he quotes from medieval Catholic mystics (such as Bernard and Bonaventure). His literary authors include Voltaire, Volney, Byron, Carlyle, Emerson, and Darwin. Spurgeon bravely follows the text wherever it goes in *The Treasury of David*. He is unflinching when it comes to the imprecatory psalms, although he did confess regarding Psalm 109 that he sometimes thought that he never should have been able to handle it at all "if it had not been for the Bulgarian massacres, which threw us into such a state of righteous indignation."²⁸ As for Psalm 137, Spurgeon defiantly begins by pronouncing it "one of the most charming compositions in the whole Book of Psalms."²⁹ Eventually, he does make a concession to the sensibilities of the reader: "The murder of innocent infants can never be sufficiently deplored, but...."³⁰ Still, many might think that this is a statement better ended with a full stop than followed by a "but." On a more positive note, Spurgeon particularly revels in the celebration of the Word of God that is the longest work in the psalter, Psalm 119. In addition to weightier matters, he included an amusing anecdote of a man who when asked what psalm he wanted read before his execution choose this one and was rewarded for his cunning by having the tardy word that he had been pardoned arrive before all of

its 176 verses could be declaimed.³¹ This exposition was so extensive and important to Spurgeon's view of the spiritual life that he had it published as a separate book entitled *The Golden Alphabet of the Praises of Holy Scripture* (1887).³²

A biography of Spurgeon published in the year of his death claimed of *The Treasury of David*: "No commentary on a single book of the Bible has in any age enjoyed such a circulation."³³ When Spurgeon's autobiography was posthumously published in 1897 it was reported that 140,000 copies of *The Treasury of David* had been sold!³⁴ This is a far cry from the assumption of many today that there could not have been genuine popular enthusiasm for the genre. Moreover, as his primary work was as an extremely busy and influential preacher and pastor, it should not be taken for granted that Spurgeon would have ever written a biblical commentary at all, let alone taken on a project this lengthy and ambitious. Moreover, Spurgeon even spent his last ailing days working on a commentary of Matthew which was published posthumously, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.³⁵ Susannah called this New Testament commentary "the tired worker's final labour of love for his Lord."³⁶ These things are a reflection of his deep commitment to the genre – to his strong sense of its efficaciousness for affecting people spiritually. As a boy preacher, Spurgeon had spent his first London honorarium to buy commentaries. Spurgeon's fatherly advice to his namesake son preparing to set out on the adventure of life was that he should endeavor to read "right through" the weighty, multi-volume commentary on the whole Bible by Matthew Henry – "if you can before you are married."³⁷ Spurgeon himself had a private library of over 12,000 volumes. A description of it begins: "the volumes commence with Commentaries on Genesis, and continue in consecutive order, through the whole of the long side of the room, to the end of Revelation." After this core, came ancillary sections such as "miscellaneous literature for general reading."³⁸ A father to many besides his own two sons, Spurgeon even published an assessment of the innumerable commentaries in existence for his students at the Pastors' College and the reading public in general,

Commenting and Commentaries.³⁹ He examined over 3,000 volumes in order to make this guide as useful as possible. He is very willing to praise highly volumes from figures whose theological convictions he regarded as heretical (including Pusey's work and commentaries by liberal Anglicans such as A.P. Stanley), but when he thought the work itself was simply lacking in scholarly merit he is often disconcertingly blunt. *Commenting and Commentaries* is replete with terse condemnations such as: "A book of no importance"; "A pile of paper, valuable to housemaids for lighting fires"; "Mere platitudes. Paper spoiled"; and "Confusing, eccentric and happily rare."⁴⁰

Those who have been interested in recovering women's voices from the past have often been averse to emphasizing writings on the scriptures. Fortunately, this is now changing. Marion Ann Taylor has been a pioneering force in this field. In 2006 appeared an anthology she co-edited with Heather E. Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis*.⁴¹ Taylor and Weir observed in the preface: "Through our extensive research, we unearthed the titles of more than a thousand books written by nineteenth-century women on the Bible."⁴² Therefore, not unlike Bradlaugh, they decided they would have a weighty volume even if they confined their scope to Genesis. Taylor has also co-edited a volume of scholarly essays, *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, and she is currently editing a major reference book of women biblical interpreters.⁴³ This work is bringing back into the scholarly conversation figures such as the Anglican mother of twelve, Sarah Trimmer, whose commentary on the entire Bible (including the Apocrypha) was published in 1805. Even some of the most celebrated Victorian women, while their names have not been forgotten, their work in this genre largely has. Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), for example, is one of the most famous poets of the Victorian age.⁴⁴ Her last book was, fittingly, a commentary on the last book of the Bible.⁴⁵ Far from being a slap-dash project, Rossetti spent seven years of her life working on this 552-page devotional exposition of the Revelation of St. John the Divine.⁴⁶ To

underline the obvious, this was not expected of her – she was neither a clergyman nor a professor of divinity. Rossetti was pursuing this project because it interested and engaged her personally and because she thought that there would be a readership to welcome it and find it useful. Moreover, it was not her only such venture. Notably, she had earlier written a commentary on the Ten Commandments: *Letter and Spirit* (1883).⁴⁷ (It included the full biblical text set out at the beginning of the work, thereby emphasizing yet more strongly that it was in the genre of a commentary.)

To conclude, biblical commentary was a vital and popular genre in nineteenth-century Britain. The examples given in this article are merely illustrative – there are innumerable other figures and volumes from this period that could be evoked. The success of the genre was predicated on the widespread biblical literacy of the Victorians: because they knew the contents of each book of the Bible, they readily grasped that a commentary on a particular book would give occasion to address specific issues of import. In a culture so deeply infused with Christianity, to recast people's views of the meaning of the Bible was nothing less than an opportunity to shape or recast their most cherished convictions and ingrained patterns of thought. More than one Victorian undertook this task on the calculation that the route to the minds and convictions of the British people ran along canonical lines.

Wheaton College

Notes

¹ This article draws upon material from my recent book, Timothy Larsen, *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford UP, 2011).

² It is notably absent, for example, from an edited volume that discusses at length numerous publications: *Pusey Rediscovered*, ed. Perry Butler (London: SPCK, 1983). (I have now filled this gap myself by discussing this commentary in *A People of One Book*.)

³ Henry Parry Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey: Doctor of Divinity; Canon of Christ Church; Regius Professor of Hebrew in the*

University of Oxford, ed. J.O. Johnston and Robert J. Wilson. 3rd ed., 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893) 3:157.

⁴ H.C.G. Matthew, "Edward Bouverie Pusey: From Scholar to Tractarian," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., XXXII, 1 (April 1981): 101-24 (here 110).

⁵ Matthew, "Pusey," 111.

⁶ Victor Shea and William Whitla, eds., *Essays and Reviews: The 1860 Text and Its Reading* (U of Virginia P, 2000), 504.

⁷ For a discussion of this, see Peter Hinchcliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion* (Oxford UP, 1987), especially chapter 3, "The Pauline Commentaries," 45-68.

⁸ For a discussion of the first one, see Timothy Larsen, "John William Colenso," in Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen, eds., *Reading Romans through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 187-204; for the controversy arising from his Old Testament commentary, see Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Baylor UP, 2004), 59-78. (I am drawing on these sources for this section on Colenso.)

⁹ J.W. Colenso, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated, and Explained from a Missionary Point of View* (New York: Appleton, 1863 [originally 1861]), 70.

¹⁰ Colenso, *Romans* 82.

¹¹ Colenso, *Romans* 109.

¹² Colenso, *Romans* 115, 116-17.

¹³ Colenso, *Romans* 162.

¹⁴ Colenso, *Romans* 122.

¹⁵ *Trial of the Bishop of Natal for Erroneous Teaching. Before the Metropolitan Bishop of Cape Town, and the Bishops of Graham's Town and the Orange Free State as Assessors* (Cape Town: "Cape Argus" Office, 1863), 326.

¹⁶ Colenso, *Romans* 168.

¹⁷ *Trial* 186.

¹⁸ George Osborn, *London Review* (April 1862), 38.

¹⁹ [Lewis Grout], "Colenso on the Doctrines: A Review of ... [Colenso's *Romans*]," September 1869, 469-70. (I have not identified the journal that carried this article. The copy I consulted is a separately bound one in the Yale Divinity School Library.)

²⁰ Colenso, *Romans* 105.

²¹ Colenso, *Romans* 197.

²² G.W. Cox, *The Life of John William Colenso, D.D. Bishop of Natal*, 2 vols. (London: W. Ridgway, 1888), 1:148.

²³ Colenso, *Romans* 73.

²⁴ Cox, *Colenso* 1:233-34.

²⁵ For that campaign, see Timothy Larsen, "Charles Bradlaugh, Militant Unbelief, and the Civil Rights of Atheists," in Caroline Litzenberger and Eileen Groth Lyon, eds., *The Human Tradition in Modern Britain* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 127-38.

²⁶ The full manuscript, however, has survived. It is in the Bradlaugh Papers, Bishopsgate Institute, Bishopsgate Library, London. For a discussion of its contents, see Larsen, *A People of One Book* 70-72.

²⁷ David Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh, M.P.* (London: Elek Books, 1971), 50.

²⁸ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 7 vols. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1908 [originally 1869-1885]), 5:vi.

²⁹ Spurgeon, *Treasury* 7:198.

³⁰ Spurgeon, *Treasury* 7:202.

³¹ Spurgeon, *Treasury* 6:4.

³² C.H. Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet of the Praises of Holy Scripture, setting forth the believer's delight in the Word of the Lord: being a devotional commentary upon the one hundred and nineteenth psalm* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1898 [originally 1887]).

³³ Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 241.

³⁴ Susannah Spurgeon and J.W. Harrauld, eds., *C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, 4 vols. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897).

Facsimile reprint: Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 3:313.

³⁵ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom. A Popular Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893).

³⁶ Spurgeon, *Gospel* iii.

³⁷ Charles Spurgeon, ed., *The Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1923), 82. The editor is Charles Haddon Spurgeon's namesake son.

³⁸ *Autobiography* 4:288-90.

³⁹ C.H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876.)

⁴⁰ Spurgeon, *Commenting*, 45, 48, 52, 108.

⁴¹ Marion Ann Taylor and Heather E. Weir, eds., *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis* (Baylor UP, 2006).

⁴² Taylor and Weir, eds., *Let Her Speak for Herself*, xvi.

⁴³ Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, eds., *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). Taylor's edited reference book in progress is *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming).

⁴⁴ While this has not seeped into popular perceptions, in contrast to many other Victorian women commentators, there is actually a rich body of technical scholarship on Rossetti's religious prose writings: see, for example, Dinah Roe, *Christina Rossetti's Faithful Imagination: The Devotional Poetry and Prose* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁴⁵ Christina Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep: A Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse (With the Text)* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1892).

⁴⁶ Georgina Battiscombe, *Christina Rossetti: A Divided Life* (London: Constable, 1981), 196.

⁴⁷ Christina Rossetti, *Letter and Spirit. Notes on the Commandments* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d. [1883]). For

a discussion of this source, see Timothy Larsen, "Christina Rossetti, the Decalogue, and Biblical Interpretation," *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte*, 16, 1 (2009), 21-36.

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