

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON, EDUCATIONALIST

Part 1 - GENERAL EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS

I

The work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon can be variously categorised - minister, preacher, pastor, philanthropist, author, political activist, evangelist, church-planter, and man of prayer. But educationalist is not a common ascription. Yet J. C. Carlile gave it emphasis by entitling chapter three of his biography 'Education and Educating'.⁽¹⁾ The Spurgeon *Autobiography* records the fact quantitatively. In 1891 the Metropolitan Tabernacle sponsored twenty-seven Sunday and Ragged Schools, with six hundred and twelve teachers and eight thousand and thirty-four scholars. Here Spurgeon was activist as well as advocate. Although there were an estimated 1½ million children in Sunday Schools by 1834, many children were still outside the influence of church or Sunday School. The social conscience was already stirring in the wake of philanthropists like Robert Raikes and Lord Shaftesbury and the enormity of the need surrounding Spurgeon in South London at the peak of his influence and activity inspired him to immense undertakings. In 1867 his provision of a school building was linked with accommodation for the elderly and was a generous venture: 'The schools on the right will be large airy rooms for two hundred or more children and will be used as day schools and Sabbath schools; the house on the left is for the schoolmaster; and there are small playgrounds behind. May the rising race be here instructed in heavenly wisdom. Mr Thomas Olney, our venerable deacon, will soon lay the first stone, and we expect that the works will proceed at once; the contract being accepted for £4,500'.⁽²⁾ The building was used mainly for the work of Sunday Schools and does not receive the same publicity as Spurgeon's other ventures. It failed to attract support as a day school and Spurgeon seems to have early abandoned that part of the scheme. There is little documented evidence of the generally attested enthusiasm and support he gave to Sunday School and Ragged School work. But that he brought to it his usual far-sighted enthusiasm is demonstrated by the loyal and generous support shown for the various buildings at the Stockwell Orphanages and Infirmary: 'The Testimonial Houses, erected with funds contributed by the Baptist Churches of the United Kingdom as a proof of the high esteem in which they held the President; the Sunday School House, given by the Tabernacle Sunday School; the headmaster's house, dining hall, play hall and infirmary completed the boys' side of the Institution, and at a later period a corresponding portion was erected for girls...'⁽³⁾ His involvement in educational pursuits was influenced by childhood experience and denominational principles.

II

Spurgeon grew up in Stambourne, learning the Puritan religious vocabulary of the people who came to his grandfather's house, which may explain why many of his utterances of later years were in the language of a past era. He learnt to read well by the age of six, and attended dame-schools run by Mrs Burleigh and Mrs Cook. He also

studied at Stockwell House School in Colchester and at the age of fourteen spent a year at All Saints' Agricultural College, Maidstone, where his uncle taught. Spurgeon was the recipient of a broad education and his voracious appetite for learning was stimulated not only in schools but at home. By the age of sixteen, assistant at Mr Edwin Leeding's school in Colchester, he contemplated opening his own school to help the poor obtain education. His superiors had no doubt of his academic ability and believed he could achieve a Cambridge degree.(4) He was a teacher turned pastor and believed in the value of Christian education theoretically and practically.

The Baptist inheritance

Baptists historically adhered to the voluntary principle: believers in their various congregations were separated from and unsupported by the State. The Particular Baptist Confession of 1644(5) and the General Baptist Confession of 1651(6) both emphasised the voluntary support of the ministry.

More than a hundred years after, the fruits of the Evangelical Revival still left Baptists with an emphasis on evangelism and a new imperative for diffusing the Word of God. Since the Scriptures contained 'the way of salvation'(7) it was vital that the Bible be distributed to all. And since the diffusion of the Scriptures was of no value while the masses could not read, there was an eagerness to educate the illiterate, thus the over-riding motive behind the strenuous efforts made by Dissenting Evangelicals to educate the urban masses was primarily evangelistic,(8) contrasting with the Tory fear of universal education as politically dangerous. Baptists eschewed such fears, partly because they advocated a scriptural education. While the Bible was seen to favour social reform, those brought up on its teaching were hardly likely to condone the atrocities committed by the French revolutionaries. Secondly, they believed that social mobility by self-effort was to be encouraged. Calvin's teaching on election did not exclude social mobility, since a man did not know to what heights God had predestined him. Therefore, by self-education, by thrift and hard honest work, a man could become a merchant, banker, or theologian. Baptists wanted an ordered society but not a static society. 'Self-help was to them a virtue more ennobling than abasement before social superiors'.(9)

The vision was clear. The means was two-fold. The Sunday School, existing among Baptists from 1756(10) was in the front line of the battle against ignorance. Secondly, numerous societies were founded for the propagating of Christian knowledge. The one most loved by Baptists was the British and Foreign School Society(11) and until 1833 it received fervent and loyal support in the form of teachers, examiners, superintendents, secretaries and funds.(12) The Society, maintained by voluntary giving and fully independent of the State, advocated a scriptural but non-sectarian education.(13)

Baptist Educational Controversies of the Nineteenth Century

In 1833 the House of Commons voted the sum of £20,000 to be divided between the then existing educational societies, the B.F.S.S. and the National Society, for the erection of schoolhouses for the education of

the poor. The B.F.S.S. received the grant enthusiastically, but Baptists in Lancashire and Cheshire refused to avail themselves of State Aid,(14) and between 1830-60 the voluntary principle was vociferously advocated among Baptists, supported by four main arguments: (i) The voluntary support of the Church by believers was scriptural(15) (ii) The acceptance of financial support from the State was degrading(16) (iii) A State Church implied injustice (iv) An Established Church implied persecution(17).

Unlike the Baptists, the Congregationalists decided to open denominational schools and planned to build five hundred schools in five years. The Wesleyans planned to build seven hundred in seven years, but with government aid.(19) The Baptists still hoped that it would be possible to work through the B.F.S.S. But by 1848 this proved impossible. Baptist support was withdrawn.(20) On 1 May 1849 the first annual meeting of the Voluntary Schools Association was held. It was against state-interference and denominational schools. A review in the *Baptist Magazine* of 1847(21) gave other reasons for opposition to a national system of education: (a) There was already an excessive amount of legislation; (b) such a system would give too much power to the Government; (c) corruption invariably creeps into State systems and they have a continual tendency to degenerate; (d) a State system drills, not educates; (e) it would put an end to private benevolence. In addition, Baptists felt strongly that any system of national education must inevitably favour the State Church.(22) Catholic trends within that Church were filling ultra-Protestants with alarm.(23) In addition certain Mancunian attempts to secularise education(24) were opposed on the ground of State intervention in education.(25)

Confidence in voluntary effort was much strengthened by the findings of the 1851 Census, published in 1853. Whilst in 1818 one in 17.25 of the under-twenty population was enrolled in school, in 1833 one in 11.27 was; in 1851 the figure was one in 8.3.(26) Non-voluntaryists were quick to point out that in some areas the deficiency was well above the national average, thereby focusing the familiar battle over the reliability of statistics.

By 1870, for several reasons, support for voluntaryism among Baptists was in decline. Societies were no longer viewed as the chief instrument for extending the Kingdom of God. The focus was now the pulpit and evangelical preaching.(27) Secondly, by the 1860s it was no longer possible to regard the primary function of the day-schools as evangelism. Rather they existed to prepare children for the labour market, not the Kingdom of God. Thirdly, apathetic parents did not send children voluntarily to voluntary aided schools.(28) Voluntaryism had failed in practice.

Mr Fletcher's report for the Newcastle Commission on the provision of voluntary elementary education in Rochdale and Bradford made this last point very plain. As one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, he reported: 'The Baptists, who hold almost universally the voluntary view, are a very large, influential and wealthy society, yet they do as a body nothing, beyond lending a school room to a private master, towards the day-school education of the place'.(29) He continued: 'Voluntaryism is, in truth, dead; it originates nothing and it maintains

what exists without liberality of spirit. The truth is that the numbers that hold this opinion are comparatively few and rapidly diminishing. I could not hear of a single Churchman or Wesleyan who entertained it, and many of the Independents are decided partisans of the contrary theory'.(30)

To avoid violating the fundamental principle, adhered to by all Baptists, that the Church should not look to the State for support in its work of diffusing Christianity, Baptists had to draw a distinction between teaching religious knowledge and general knowledge, between the religious elements and the secular elements of education. For years Baptists had claimed that the two were inseparable and that the religious element was by far the most important of the two. But it was now of the utmost importance that the State undertake the responsibility of education and in order that Baptists could justify co-operation with the State in providing a national system of elementary education, most of them began to espouse the secularisation of that education.(31)

Spurgeon's Involvement

The Education Act of 1870 marked the beginning of the end of evangelical educational philanthropy and the beginning of a new relationship between Baptists and the State. On the eve of the passing of the Education Act, C. H. Spurgeon maintained: 'If the Nonconformists of England had been logical, they would, instead of allowing the Government to touch it, have been more liberal themselves in its support. It was a gross falsehood to say that Voluntaryism had failed'.(32) Because Christians could not agree on the nature of religious teaching, Forster's Act of 1870(33) created a dual system. In the board schools, religious instruction was to be free of any catechism or other denominational teaching. This created a new religious educator - the schoolmaster whose standard was the English Authorised Version was to interpret the Scriptures in any way that did *not* agree with a Creed, catechism or other institutional formulary.(34) Moved by conscience, Spurgeon 'required that the Bible should be read in the school where children were taught and if the Bible were excluded he would preach defiance of the government up and down the land'.(35) He did not carry out this severe threat.

His response to society was to see Christ as the converter of men, in his culture and his society. But he was a prominent spokesman for political Dissent and an ardent champion of Gladstonian Liberalism. From 1867 he spoke out strongly in favour of the disestablishment of the Church of England from the State, and Spurgeon's advocacy of religious voluntaryism was abetted by his being seen as its prime example.

His attitude on educational voluntaryism changed. As an ardent Liberal supporter(37) Spurgeon defended the 1870 Education Act and W. E. Forster, its chief mentor. He advocated the election of W. R. Selway, one of his college tutors, to the London School Board. His London way differed from both Mancunian and Birmingham attempts to frame a religious compromise. He wanted Bible reading, but not doctrinal teaching, because it was biased and ineffective.(38) Thus he

supported a national system with State intervention because it was needed and wanted. During the 'seventies he set out to reconcile Dissenters on the educational issue and achieve the election of good men to school boards. His views changed more for pragmatic than theoretical reasons. His most prominent activity concerned evening classes and the provision of pastoral training based on distinctive principles.

Evening Classes

In 1877 Spurgeon's College had 110 students, which enabled 'careful and judicious' selection.(39) Many of them came through the evening classes which 'had been a great source of supply to the college'(40) and also a means of 'sending out colporteurs, city missionaries, lay preachers, Sabbath-school teachers and workers of all sorts'.(41) This aspect of the work, known as 'The Christian Working Men's College', offered a gratuitous education to anyone preparing for Christian service. By 1877 there were between two and three hundred names on the books, a fine spirit and efficient teaching.(42)

Evening classes had been pioneered by King's College in London in 1849. Eighty three students had attended some or all of the experimental classes provided for employed men. These classes were revived in 1855, soon after F. D. Maurice had established another series of evening lectures in connection with his Working Men's College in London. Eventually, King's College provided a means of ministerial training through evening lectures, in a bid to boost flagging numbers. Most theological colleges in the mid-nineteenth century found it necessary to provide some elementary instruction for some of the ill-educated students. Spurgeon's classes purposed both to help the inadequate beginner in his education and to make available the benefits of the College's classes to a wider clientele.

The classes were begun in 1862 in the same rooms at the Tabernacle used by the College as a means of helping any young man over sixteen to be educated for effective Christian service. Some came from non-Baptist churches, some began unable to read or write, but all were tutored according to ability in order to increase their knowledge.

By 1867 the curriculum included the Classics, Mathematics, Natural Science, and all branches of liberal education. They operated in the following way:

Monday	8.30p.m.	Bible Class	Mr Rogers
		Writing Class	Mr C. D. Evans
Tuesday	7.30p.m.	Elementary English	Mr C. D. Evans
Wednesday	7.30p.m.	Advanced English	Mr A. Ferguson
		Elementary Greek & Latin	Mr W. Durban
		Advanced Greek & Latin	Mr D. Gracey
	8.00p.m.	French	Mr W. Durban
		Science	Mr W. R. Selway(43)

Mr Ferguson's English class included a monthly debate held on appointed subjects, where two students read short papers giving opposite viewpoints which were then discussed. This encouraged clear

thinking and concise expression. These papers were gathered up into a manuscript magazine produced by the students.

Mr Evans' class totalled about forty in one week; others were enrolled but could only attend spasmodically due to pressure of business. A few came to the writing class on a Monday; more used Dr Morrell's *Parsing and Composition* to study elocution and analysis on a Tuesday.(44) During the Advanced Englishon Wednesday evenings the teaching method included the reading aloud of prepared essays so that potential preachers could practise their diction.(45)

Linguistic and scientific studies for evening class students ran parallel to those used with the full-time students during the day. John Jackson, a pastor at Sevenoaks, spoke of the pleasure and many advantages he received through the classes: 'Here the mental culture of young men in business may be aided. Such as are anxious to work for the Lord ... may derive extraordinary assistance. This was my own experience. For two years I was thus helped in my business and at the same time in my Christian life and work. On entering College I found nothing new. I was acquainted with the tutors and the students and to some extent with all the subjects for study. The Evening Classes afforded the best preparation for the College and for the ministry. Poverty is no disqualification. Here is the way for all who have the will'.(46)

The evening class way was taken by many young men. In the mid-'sixties the number registered exceeded 150 and in 1873 the number attending each week was 70, about one-third of those registered.(47) In 1887 the students travelled from places like King's Cross, Hackney, Burdett Road, New Cross, Denmark Hill and Wandsworth.(48) The greatest interest was in the class studying Hodge's *Outlines of Theology*. The Greek class had read John's Gospel and there had also been times of corporate prayer and praise.

In 1888 Spurgeon hinted that 'this part of our work does not command such numbers of men as it used to do'.(49) It was explained that the reason was that Board Schools and Polytechnics now supplied much of the elementary education and there were more distracting amusements which kept young men from study.(50) But many young men had passed from the classes into the College, saving the tutors the drudgery of elementary teaching; whilst other men secured enhanced business prospects through the education received in the evening classes, with their increasing diversity of curriculum; Elizabethan History and Literature and 'Grecian' History were now included in the weekly programme.

The essence of the programme was flexibility. Just as the full college course was adapted to each man's need in reference to length of course, linguistic study and support for further study,(51) so Spurgeon could say of the evening classes, 'Our endeavour is to adapt to each man's capacity ... we have no stereotyped rules and are bound to nothing'.(52) In this as in other ventures, the President took a lead. He pioneered a Friday night popular lecture for men, charging twopence for admission. Subjects were mainly of an historical or biographical kind and charted the course that the evening classes

would take.(53) His pioneering commitment to education was not only shown in evening classes but through a church-based ministerial-training project.

III

'Charles Haddon Spurgeon ... survives in his institutions'.(54) One of these was the Pastors' College, founded in 1856. Of the opportunities for pastoral training in London at that time, C. H. Spurgeon said: 'No college at that time appeared to me to be suitable for the class of men that Providence and the grace of God drew around me. They were mostly poor and most of the colleges involved necessarily a considerable outlay to the student; for even where the education was free, books, clothes and other incidental expenses required a considerable sum per annum. Moreover, it must be frankly admitted that my views of the Gospel and the mode of teaching preachers, were and are somewhat peculiar. I may have been uncharitable in my judgment but I thought the Calvinism of the theology usually taught to be very doubtful and the fervour of the generality of the students to be far behind their literary attainments'.(55)

In 1810 Robert Hall wanted 'an educated ministry which links true religion and sound learning'.(56) In that year an Academy was founded at Stepney in London for the training of Baptist ministers. He gave three reasons for establishing the Institution in the Metropolis: financial support was easier to come by; the life of the capital would be an expansion to the youthful mind; teachers in various branches of science, nowhere else to be found would improve the taste and direct the exertions of the students.(57) The founding of Stepney College marked the end of a century of frustrated attempts to secure a ministerial training institution for Baptists in London.

E. Foreman suggests four reasons why 'for more than a hundred years the Bristol College stood alone as a permanent Baptist venture into the fields of ministerial education'.(58) London churches generally acted alone with none strong enough to support an independent venture. No wealthy Baptists felt able to support a training establishment. There was also a general fear that education led to heresy, and a contentment with the scheme whereby one minister trained a younger colleague.(59) Obviously the situation changed in the nineteenth century because in 1856 the Rev. C. S. Sargeant suggested the General Baptists' Midland College move to London. But Nottingham was favoured as the site.

The *Baptist Magazine* of 1810 laid great stress on the part of the churches in any training scheme: 'The pastor must sympathise with the men God has called to the ministry and must examine them frequently in all that relates to faith, hope and love. He will instruct them ... relating to them by his own experience. He will then inform the church of their desire and seek their support before commending them for training'.(60) For London churches that commendation would go to the Stepney Institution, elsewhere the focus would be on Bristol. Both colleges had an entrance examination and links with the degree course of London University. Stepney was 'the most prestigious and academically respected of the Baptist Colleges'.(61) At Bristol 'the

College reaffirmed its conviction that it was desirable that our ministers shall appear, both in the pulpit and in society, as intelligent, well-informed, highly cultivated men, showing that between nonconformity and mental incapacity there is no such inseparable relation as is sometimes taken for granted'.(62)

In 1856, when Stepney Institution moved to Regent's Park, Spurgeon founded his College. The early history of the College was haphazard, 'A romance of faith'.(63) At his own church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he saw a need 'to help preachers become better ones'.(64) The first student was a recently converted ropemaker, T. W. Medhurst. He began to come weekly to his pastor for several hours' instruction in theology. He was boarded with Rev. C. H. Hosken of Crayford and supported with money out of Spurgeon's own salary. Then he was put under the full-time tuition of Rev. George Rogers of Camberwell. At this point Spurgeon 'had not even a remote idea whereunto the college would grow'.(65)

The beginning was small and open to severe criticism. Many thought the venture unnecessary, unconventional and divisive. But Dr Campbell, attending an early annual meeting, felt the College was an 'exceedingly interesting affair. It is a thing by itself, there is nothing to be compared with it in these islands. It shows the founder to be ... a singular ecclesiastical originality. Not satisfied with things as now existing in colleges, and guided by his strong instincts, he determined in a happy hour to create something for himself. His habit has been ... to do things in a new way'.(66)

Such novelty did not lead to isolationism. Indeed, Spurgeon said 'in all other institutions doing similar work we take the deepest interest and shall continue to do so'.(67) He was a keen supporter of 'the college principle', frequently extolling its virtues from historical antecedents.(68) George Rogers wrote an article on 'The scripturalness of the Pastors' College'.(69) He surveyed the evidence from Samuel to Paul and from Wycliffe to Wesley, concluding 'The College ... is in perfect accordance with the method by which the gospel was commanded to be preached to all nations'.(70) But he also made two important provisos. He highlighted the link of Pastors' College with the pastorate of a local church, commenting that this is 'rarely exemplified'.(71) Using the example of Doddridge's academy he also warned against colleges becoming too formal and legalistic. 'The Academy sought to make ministers rather than to aid them. It was not so successful, therefore, as it might otherwise have been'.(72) Thus 'Colleges for the Christian ministry are Scriptural in proportion as they are prompted and controlled by that ministry as its natural results'.(73) But nonconformity in the nineteenth century had often made its colleges centres of learning rather than religion. Therefore Spurgeon's College was founded upon distinctive principles.

Educational Principles

'Encourage and help the colleges more and more,' Spurgeon said, 'but see to it that those you aid are seminaries for the growth of unmistakable gospel preachers'.(74) At the Metropolitan Tabernacle the Pastor found around him many young men 'earnest'(75) in tone and with an irresistible urge to preach the Gospel!(76) Their only 'sad

hindrance'(77) was a lack of education. Nothing would dampen their enthusiasm and Spurgeon wanted to improve their slender attainments and consequent effectiveness through education. He called the college 'a new school of the prophets'(78) and would have agreed with a later biographer who wrote; 'If the cure of the body and the conduct of affairs demand the best possible education ... surely a no less thorough mental training is needed in preparation for the far more difficult and delicate task of curing the souls'.(79)

The primary objective of the college was to make preachers of the Gospel. No man was accepted for training unless he was naturally fitted to preaching, and, as far as the human eye could judge, divinely called to that office. No amount of mental ability or scholastic achievement could make up for the absence of this. 'Our institution', Spurgeon said, 'aims to keep out of the sacred office those who are not called to it. We are continually declining candidates because we question their fitness. Some of these have education and money and are supported by earnest requests from parents and friends, but all this avails them nothing!'(80) He would not tolerate 'a low state of piety, a want of enthusiasm, a failure in private devotion, a lack of concentration'.(81)

It became a principle that 'a man must, during about two years, have been engaged in preaching and must have some seals to his ministry before we could entertain his application'.(82) This was because 'we wanted not men whom tutors could make into scholars but men whom the Lord had ordained to be preachers'.(83) Literary achievement was not undervalued but neither was it considered indispensable; it was always to be employed to a higher end: 'The present age ... demands earnest and faithful preachers of the Gospel irrespective of literary titles and qualifications'.(84) Thus the all-controlling aim of the instruction given was the preparation of powerful preachers. Academic prestige alone was discarded; loss of intellectual respectability was risked; the curriculum was divorced from university degrees. 'There is a learning that is essential to a successful ministry, viz. the learning of the whole Bible to know God, by prayer, and experience of His dealings'.(85)

Spurgeon declared emphatically 'Our men seek to preach efficiently, to get to the heart of the masses, to evangelise the poor - this is the College ambition, this and nothing else'.(86) The world might educate men for its own purposes but the church must instruct men for its special service. 'We aim at helping men to set forth the truth of God'.(87) But if all students had to be preachers, Spurgeon ensured that all preachers could be students. He was training 'men of the people'.(88) As long as they had 'genuine talent'(89) he did not 'greatly concern himself in regard to ... educational shortcomings'.(90) He admitted there was a 'lowering of the average of scholarship'(91) but believed that 'the shrewd common-sense, rough and ready brother is usually the successful man'.(92)

When the Baptist Union assembly discussed the absence of an agreed standard for its ministry in 1846 and 1865 and Dr Green of Rawdon College put forward a plan for united action in 1872, preparatory training only had a place 'if it was necessary'.(93) Such

training was a primary purpose of the Pastors' College and even in the 1890s, when the denomination sought to raise the varying educational standards of the colleges, 'this went against the grain of traditional thought and was felt to be an attack on those institutions like Spurgeon's, which met a definite need within the denomination'.(94)

The educational principle to train all preachers required defence from twin attacks. These came from people who in Spurgeon's opinion undervalued or overvalued education. 'Time was when an educated ministry was looked upon by certain of our brethren as a questionable blessing; indeed it was thought that the less a minister knew the better, for there was then the more room for him to be taught by God. From the fact that God does not need man's wisdom it was inferred that He does need man's ignorance'... This depreciation of learning was a natural recoil from the folly which magnified education into a kind of deity'.(95)

It was acknowledged that God used the preaching of unlearned men, but as a rule among their own class. In an age of general education, men will be selected who will not drive away their hearers by glaring ignorance of the simplest rules of correct speech. Emerging in a period of great educational and religious revival, the College needed to train ministers for a revived church and a more highly educated public, to provide preachers for the vast masses of the East End of London and the pulpits where scholarship and piety were both required. An observer writing in 1883 felt this had been achieved and thus overcome some of the criticism. 'I must say, from what I have seen and heard this esteem had to be won, nay in some circles, compelled. Being gained thus it is the more valuable and is likely to be the more durable'.(96)

'As a College we have had to struggle with a reputation based upon falsehood and created by jealousy ... the Institution never deserved to be charged with giving a mere apology for an education'.(97) Such criticism arose because the early curriculum was very broad.(98) It was a need which diminished.(99) But even untrained men in pastorates were willing to become students for a while because 'the times grow more and more exacting as to the matter of education'.(100) This represented a considerable improvement on the situation as at the mid-century. In 1846 the *Baptist Record* noted 'signs of spiritual depression, diminished vitality and power'.(101) Halevy summed up the situation: 'For English dissent as a whole the years immediately before and after 1850 were a period of decline'.(102) The Bristol College Committee also reported that: 'there is reason to fear that piety is becoming less fervent and active among its numbers and if so from this cause our supply will be still further diminished, since unless the spirit of ardent zeal animates ... churches, few men would be suitable to engage in the work'.(103) In contrast, Spurgeon's first candidates were confident and eager, but needed to become 'prepared and educated young men'.(104)

Financial Strategy

The great majority of Anglican clergy of the time were drawn from wealthy and comfortable homes and had the means of paying for their

own education. The main appeal of Nonconformists was also 'to the rising and growingly prosperous middle class'.(105) Annual Congregational and Baptist Assemblies attacked slavery, advocated disestablishment, free trade, extension of the franchise and the political rights of the individual but 'showed ... little or no interest in legislation to improve working class conditions'.(106) Bristol College wanted 'highly cultivated'(107) students, whilst the colleges at Richmond (Methodist), Stepney and St John's Wood (Anglican) gave financial help to students only on a very limited scale.

Of the first 157 students of Spurgeon's College, 50 came from the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Southwark; an area described as 'dim, dirty and destitute'(108) and 'the poorest part of the Metropolis'.(109) One of its missions met in 'deplorable buildings'(110) in a squalid area. Of the other students 20 came from London, 18 from East Anglia, 24 from the Southern Counties and 45 from elsewhere. The students' future work lay among 'the working population, the real sinew and blood and bone of England'(111) and they needed to be men 'among men, practical, working, thoughtful'.(112)

Spurgeon determined 'never to refuse a man on account of absolute poverty but rather to provide him with all needful food, board and raiment, that he might not be hindered on account of money'.(113) Only when relatives and friends could make a subscription was this desired. Students were encouraged to buy their own books through the availability of cheap editions. The temptation was resisted to refuse poor men for the sake of the College's prestige and in favour of 'a better class of man'.(114) It was proved that 'eminently useful men'(115) spring from all ranks and that the College would continue to aid the needy but pious brother who came from the class of ploughman, fisherman, and mechanic. In the early days of the College 'some very successful brethren needed everything, and if they had been required to pay they must have remained illiterate preachers'.(116) This made early College finances precarious but as the years went by more and more men could support themselves in part or in whole.

The financial burden of the college rested initially and continued to rest upon Spurgeon's shoulders. At the outset two of his deacons, Messrs. Winsor and Olney, promised aid; but it was Spurgeon's own thrift and the donation of all proceeds from the sale of sermons to America that substantially raised the £800 needed annually to support the students to 1861. During the slavery controversy his sermons ceased to sell in the United States and his income diminished. Several anonymous donors sent gifts of £100 or more to maintain the work but the regular income was now accepted as a responsibility of the Tabernacle congregations and they donated a weekly offering which by 1869 provided £1,869 per year. 'How is the College supported?' Spurgeon was asked and could confidently reply: 'The provision for the young men embraces everything which is necessary for their support - in some instances even to clothing and pin money. Their daily lives are under pastoral supervision. The weekly offerings in the Tabernacle, amounting to an average of more than £30 every Sabbath, are devoted exclusively to their support. All around the Tabernacle are placards inviting offerings and to those are attached notices of the

amounts contributed on the last previous Sabbath ... To me this method has had special significance as a reminder that the raising up of them to preach the gospel is the first duty of the church'.(117) A deacon, Mr Murrell, made the offering his special interest and made sure that any donations in excess of need were used for chapel building. Another deacon, Mr Phillips, gave an annual dinner to college friends to raise money.

The President's financial principles were greatly influenced by George Muller. Funds should be sought through faith and prayer(118) after the style of the seventeenth century German pietist, A. H. Francke. At the laying of the foundation stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle on 16 August 1859, Spurgeon claimed that he had asked scarcely an individual for a contribution towards the building costs, 'because I have such a solid conviction that the money must come'.(119) In 1863 he criticised the Baptist Missionary Society for running into debt. By October 1864 he had made the acquaintance of James Hudson Taylor and in later years enjoyed his company on holiday in Mentone.(120) He adopted Taylor's motto, 'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies', for that of the College's financial policy. Ministerial training was under the 'faith-mission' principle.

Theological Priorities

The College was founded in 'stirring times'(121): traditional beliefs were feeling the shock of evolutionary ideas. Economic views popularised by Charles Kingsley and John Ruskin were filtering through the minds of intelligent working men. The Anglo-Catholic movement filled ultra-protestants with alarm. Spurgeon did not set out to counteract the tendency of the times, yet no one can doubt his specific theological viewpoint. Horton Davies said 'Spurgeon swam strongly against the tide of the age'.(122) Commenting on the fact that the critics did not think 'the boy preacher of Cambridgeshire'(123) would have staying power, he says 'they had forgotten the Calvinistic tradition in which he was reared'.(124) Spurgeon acknowledged freely his own debt to the Puritan divines.(125) If Spurgeon had a hero it was the unyielding Calvinist, Whitfield.(126)

In 1871 he wrote 'We say distinctly that the theology of the Pastors' College is Puritanic. The improvements brought forth by what is called 'modern thought' we regard with suspicion ... we are old fashioned enough to prefer Manton to Maurice, Charnock to Robertson and Owen to Voysey'.(127) Students preached acceptably among the Presbyterians in Scotland and Holland. Yet Spurgeon's brand of Calvinism was 'illogical'.(128) He could declare the majesty of God and the freedom of man. He was dubbed an Arminian by high-Calvinist Baptists who disliked his open-communion views and the note of gospel invitation in his preaching. He defended zealously the doctrines of substitutionary atonement and everlasting punishment, and he maintained belief in an infallible Bible and verbal inspiration.

His first Principal, George Rogers, shared his views. He had no sympathy with 'any modern concealment or perversion of great gospel truths'.(129) He loathed 'all mystic and rationalistic obscurations of the

plain and full-orbed doctrines of grace'.(130) Modernistic views were taught at the College only to be able to 'defend the things which are most surely believed among us'.(131) But whilst acknowledging that ministers must know the errors of their day in order to meet them, a particular method of teaching was insisted upon to inculcate conviction not hesitation.(132) Otherwise faith could be crippled, spiritual ardour dampened and morals corrupted in testing the theories of the hour.

This placed heavy responsibilities upon the tutors, since to have heresy in college meant false teaching throughout the churches. To defile the fountain is to pollute the stream. Spurgeon pointed to the influence of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in producing Puritan preachers for the Commonwealth period: 'The noblest school of English theologians sprang from the labours of tutors whose theology was sound and scriptural and whose learning was consecrated to the understanding of sacred writ. Had there been no such Puritan College there might have been no Puritan divines'.(133) If ignorance was never an aid to grace, then learning must be dominated by 'the doctrine of grace coupled with a firm belief in human responsibility ... held with intense conviction'.(134)

In an article in *The Times* of 13 April 1857, strong doctrine was linked with sound preaching. 'Eloquence that will move the masses requires not merely a loud voice but proper material to exert itself upon ... there must be a strong sentiment, some bold truth to make a man shout. The doctrine of sudden conversion or of irresistible grace can be shouted'.(135) Agreeing with such sentiment, tutors at the College were required to be both dogmatic and fervent. 'They should thunder in preaching, and lighten in conversation, they should be flaming in prayer, shining in life and burning in spirit ... The spirit of the gospel must be in him as well as its doctrine'.(136) It remains to be seen whether this high ideal was fulfilled in the men employed on the staff of the College.

Thus as one examines Spurgeon's commitment to education, it is clear that he was a principled man, reflecting the voluntaryist inheritance of the denomination in which he ministered; and yet being pragmatic in his outlook to State schooling, and in the provision of College finances. He was unafraid to advertise the needs of the College, and to enlist all kinds of people and means in fund-raising activities. He may have gained his financial principles from others, but he certainly went beyond them in the pragmatic world in which they were hammered out on the anvil of experience. He was also committed to firm theological and educational principles; but always wanted to relate these to the people that God actually set around him. He wanted to stretch each man according to his ability; thus was prepared to train those whose earlier educational opportunities were very limited; and yet to finance others towards University education. He was idealistic, flexible and pragmatic in his approach.

NOTES

- 1 J. C. Carlile, *C. H. Spurgeon, An Interpretative Biography*, London 1933, p.54.
- 2 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1867, p.133.
- 3 C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol.IV, London 1900, pp.336, 173.

- 4 Carlile, op.cit., pp.54-69.
- 5 The 'Confession of the London Particular Baptists', 1644, records in Article 38 that '... according to Christ's Ordinances, they that preach the Gospel should live on the Gospel and not by constraint be compelled from the people by a forced law'. W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confession of Faith*, London 1911, p.105.
- 6 In 1651, thirty congregations in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and the adjoining counties sent representatives to a meeting which drew up the first General Baptist Confession. This Confession makes it quite plain that Baptists were against the acceptance of State aid for the Church. Article 60 reads: 'That the maintenance of the Ministers which labour in the Word of God ought to be free and Charitable Benevolence, or the cheerful contribution of those that acknowledge themselves members of the same fellowship - 2 Cor.9:13'. McGlothlin, op.cit., p.184.
- 7 O. Gregory, *The Miscellaneous Works and Remains of the Late Rev. Robert Hall*, London 1846, p.383.
- 8 In Andrew Fuller's sermon, preached in December 1814 for the B.F.S.S., the religious motive is clear and plain - 'We have a written religion: and though it is not essential to salvation that we should be able to read and write, yet these are essential to our making any considerable proficiency in the knowledge of God'. In 1815 Rev. Robert Hall, then minister of Broadmead Baptist Church, preached at the Bristol Auxiliary of the B.F.S.S. and argued that 'a nation that professed an inspired revelation (the Bible) must appreciate the necessity of teaching to read'. At a meeting held in January 1818 to form an Auxiliary School Society of the B.F.S.S., the Rev. F. A. Cox, Baptist Minister at Hackney, expressed the opinion that 'the school system is entitled to take precedence of most if not all other charities - even the Bible Society itself: for of what use were Bibles if people could not read them?' Rev. E. Irving, minister of Eagle Lane, London, expressed the same view in 1826 at the Annual Meeting of the B.F.S.S. when he said 'exertions to circulate the Scriptures must be vain unless the people to whom they were sent were also taught to read them ... the labours of missionaries must be fruitless unless education was first instilled'.
- 9 J. M. Goldstream, *The Social Content of Education 1808-70*, Ireland 1972, p.34.
- 10 W. T. Whitley, *A Baptist Bibliography*, Vol.II, London 1922, p.6.
- 11 *Baptist Magazine*, 1826, p.285.
- 12 In May 1824 Rev. J. M. Cramp, a friend and leading mind of the B.F.S.S., became one of the two secretaries. He also did valuable work for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Rev. T. A. Higgins, *Life of J. M. Cramp, D.D.*, 1796-1881, Montreal 1887, 39-40.
- 13 H. B. Burns, *A Century of Education*, London 1908, p.32.
- 14 W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of North West England, 1649-1913*, London 1913, p.193.
- 15 J. Angus, *The Voluntary System*, 1839, pp.11, 48.
- 16 C. Stovel, *Hints on the Regulation of Christian Churches*, 1835, p.197.
- 17 Angus, op.cit., p.72.
- 18 Baptist Union Reports 1832-44. *Account of the Proceedings of the Thirty-first Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union*, April 1843, p.9.

- 19 *Educational Conference of the B.F.S.S.* 14-15 March 1844, p.4.
 20 *Baptist Handbook* 1848, p.64.
 21 *Baptist Magazine*, 1847, p.28.
 22 G. W. Rusling, 'The Nonconformist Conscience', *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol.22, July 1967, p.129.
 23 J. P. Mursell, *Leicester Chronicle*, 1st April 1843.
 24 S. E. Maltby, *Manchester and the Movement for National Elementary Education 1800-70*, 1918, p.80.
 25 *Baptist Handbook* 1853, pp.63-4.
 26 H. J. Horton, *The Case of the Manchester Educationalists*, Pt.2, 1852, pp.17-18.
 27 J. P. Mursell, *Evangelical Missions*, 1855, p.26.
 28 *General Baptist Magazine*, 1868, p.355.
 29 *Parliamentary Papers 'Education': General*, Vol.IV, 1861, p.209.
 30 *Ibid.*, p.210.
 31 *Baptist Handbook* 1870, p.173.
 32 *The Inquirer*, 18th June 1870.
 33 Asa Briggs, *Victorian People*, London 1954, p.xxxi, 138.
 34 J. W. Adamson, *English Education 1789-1902*, Cambridge 1930, p.359.
 35 *The Inquirer*, 18th June 1870.
 36 G. H. Pike, *The Life and Work of C. H. Spurgeon*, Vol.II, London 1887, p.201.
 37 See Patricia Kruppa, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress*, New York, 1982, ch.6.
 38 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1868, p.139ff.
 39 *Annual Report*, 1877, p.3. 40 *Ibid.*, p.4.
 41 *Ibid.*, p.4. 42 *Ibid.*, p.5.
 43 *Annual Report*, 1866, p.36-7. 44 *Ibid.*, p.5.
 45 *Ibid.* 46 *Annual Report* 1867, p.36-7.
 47 *Ibid.*, 1873, p.6.
 48 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1887, p.316.
 49 *Ibid.*, 1888, p.311. 50 *Ibid.*, 1889, p.317.
 51 Six students were sent on to Edinburgh University and another to study medicine for missionary work. All received financial aid.
 52 *Annual Report*, 1871, p.4 53 Carlile, op.cit., p.182.
 54 Dr Gilbert Laws, Speech Day, Spurgeon's College, London, on 26th June 1958.
 55 Carlile, op.cit., p.171.
 56 Robert Hall, *Prospectus for the Baptist Academical Institution at Stepney*, 1810.
 57 *Ibid.*
 58 H. Foreman, 'The Early Separatists, the Baptists and Education 1580-1780 (with special reference to the clergy)', Univ. of Leeds Ph.D. thesis, 1976. This was despite a strong plea to the London churches in 1770, see N. Moon, *Education for Ministry*, Bristol 1979, p.131ff.
 59 See the letter of Robert Burnside to Dr Samuel Stennett in 1779 for examples of the study undertaken. *BQ*, 9, 1939, pp.424-6.
 60 *The Baptist Magazine*, 1810, p.6.
 61 'The Education of Baptist Ministers 1870-1900', *BQ*, July 1976, p.323. A letter from Frederick R. Crewdson of Weybridge, dated 4th February 1888, makes the point: 'Dear Sir [Mr Spurgeon], In August last I went up to Regent's Park College and did not succeed at the examination owing to my education not being up to the standard of the College...'

- 62 Moon, op.cit., p.47.
- 63 Carlile, op.cit., p.169.
- 64 *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 1855, Vol.I, p.268.
- 65 Carlile, op.cit., p.171.
- 66 *Annual Report*, 1882, p.17.
- 67 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1881, p.175.
- 68 'Honorat in the opening years of the fifth century retired to the little island near Cannes which still bears his name, and attracted around him a number of students. The one best known to us is Patrick, the evangelizer of Ireland ... Thus did Honorat and Columba in the olden days, and so did Wycliffe and Luther and Calvin in the Reformation times, train the armies of the Lord for their Mission. Schools of the prophets are a prime necessity if the power of religion is to be kept alive and propagated in the land'. *Autobiography*, 1888, Vol.III, p.137. 'We talk of Luther and Calvin in the days of the Reformation but we must remember that these men became what they were largely through their power to stamp their image and superscription upon other men with whom they came into contact. If you went to Wurtemberg it was not only Luther that you saw but Luther's College - the men around him - the students all being formed into young Luthers under his direction. It was the same at Geneva. How much Scotland owes to the fact that Calvin could instruct John Knox! How much have other nations derived from the little republic of Switzerland on account of Calvin's having the clear common sense to perceive that one man could not hope to affect a whole nation except by multiplying himself, and spreading his views by writing them upon the fleshy tablets of the hearts of young and earnest men! The Churches seem to have forgotten this. It is nothing but sanctified common sense that leads the church for the formation of a college. The church ought to make the college the first object of its care'. G. H. Pike, *The Life and Work of C. H. Spurgeon*, Vol.IV, p.356.
- 69 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1884, p.307ff.
- 70 Ibid. 71 Ibid.
- 72 Ibid., p.309. 73 Ibid.
- 74 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1881, p.175.
- 75 Carlile, op.cit., p.171.
- 76 Ibid. 77 Ibid.
- 78 *Autobiography*, Vol.II, 1898, p.141.
- 79 'By one who knew him well', C. H. Spurgeon, p.133f.
- 80 *The Swrd and The Trowel*, 1887, p.206.
- 81 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1889, p.311.
- 82 *Autobiography*, Vol.II, p.148. 83 Ibid.
- 84 Rogers, *Annual Report* 1866.
- 85 W. Williams, *Personal Reminiscences of C. H. Spurgeon*, London 1895,
- 86 *Autobiography*, Vol.II, p.149. /p.193.
- 87 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1889, p.311.
- 88 Anon, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A biographical sketch*, p.139.
- 89 G. H. Pike, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, Vol.I, p.233.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Biography*, London 1920, p.232.
- 92 *Annual Report*, 1867, p.3. A. McDougall, a student from the Metropolitan Tabernacle who went to pastor a church at Rothsay after training, bore testimony to the intellectual situation: 'My knowledge of the English language was very defective; I had heard

- about mathematics but did not know what the word meant. I had never declined a Latin noun and as for Greek, I did not know the letters'. *Ibid.*, p.39.
- 93 J.E.B.Munson, 'The Education of Baptist Ministers 1870-1900', *BQ*, Vol.27, 1976, pp.320-7.
- 94 Munson, *op.cit.*, p.326.
- 95 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1882, p.258.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 1883, p.227
- 97 *Ibid.*, 1881, p.302.
- 98 *Ibid.*, 1885, p.207f. The course ranged from Scripture and Doctrine to History and Languages. It included Astronomy, Chemistry, Zoology, Geology, Botany, Mental and Moral Science, Metaphysics, Casuistry, Mathematics, Oratory, and Church Work.
- 99 'Secular education becoming more general, our successors will, as a rule, be far better furnished in that respect than the mass of the present generation and less time will, therefore, be spent in the more ordinary part of College tuition'. *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1881, p.308.
- 100 C. H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1885, p.206.
- 101 Norman Moon, *op.cit.*, p.46.
- 102 E. Halevy, *The Age of Peel and Cobden*, p.330.
- 103 Norman Moon, *op.cit.*, p.46.
- 104 *Annual Report*, 1867, p.30
- 105 E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, London 1958, p.71.
- 106 *Ibid.*, p.72.
- 107 Moon, *op.cit.*, p.47.
- 108 C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work*, London 1876, p.53.
- 109 W. R. Nicoll, *Princes of the Church*, London 1921, p.50.
- 110 Eric Hayden, *A Centennial History of the Metropolitan Tabernacle*, London 1962, p.30.
- 111 *Annual Report*, 1870, p.7.
- 112 *Ibid.*
- 113 F. W. Harte, *Historical Tablets of the Pastors' College*, pp.10,11.
- 114 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1881, p.302.
- 115 *Ibid.*
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 *The New York Examiner*, 1869.
- 118 C. H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, p.352.
- 119 *Autobiography*, Vol.II, London 1900, pp.215, 283-4.
- 120 *Annual Report* 1966, p.43.
- 121 Carlile, *op.cit.*, p.169.
- 122 Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, Vol.IV, London 1962, p.333. John Kent emphasises the point too strongly when he says: 'His reaction to the effect of Biblical criticism on the Baptist Ministry had been to set up a college for training pastors himself', *Holding the Fort*, London 1978, p.303-4.
- 123 *Ibid.*, p.333.
- 124 *Ibid.*, p.333.
- 125 *Autobiography*, Vol.I, 1900, p.104. He found most help in Bunyan's writings; Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*; Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*; Alleine's *Alarm to Sinners*; and J. A. James's *Anxious Enquirer*.
- 126 'My own model, if I have such a thing, in due subordination to my Lord, is George Whitefield'. *Autobiography*, Vol.II, 1900, p.66.
- 127 *Annual Report*, 1871, p.5.
- 128 Carlile, *op.cit.*, p.289.
- 129 *Annual Report*, 1866, p.14.
- 130 *Ibid.*
- 131 *Ibid.*
- 132 Spurgeon maintained that tutors should not teach their students in that broad liberal manner which presents a number of 'view-points' and leaves the ultimate choice to the student; rather they should forcibly and unmistakeably declare the mind of God and show a

determined predilection for the old theology, being saturated in it and ready to die for it. *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1871, p.227.

- 133 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1881, p.309. Equally he used Philip Doddridge's Evangelical Academy at Northampton as a warning against undogmatic preaching. 'Dr Doddridge was as sound as he was amiable, but perhaps he was not always judicious and not sufficiently bold and decided'. His successor, Dr Ashworth, continued the teaching policy - described by his pupil, Joseph Priestly, the Unitarian, in these words: 'In my time the academy was in a state peculiarly favourable to the serious pursuit of truth, as the students were about equally divided upon every question of much importance. Our tutors also were of different opinions ... the general plan of our studies ... was exceedingly favourable to free enquiry, as we were referred to authors on both sides of every question'. *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1887, p.122-6 and 166-172. In these 'Downgrade' articles the decline of eighteenth century nonconformity is attributed largely to the theological colleges.
- 134 *Annual Report* 1881, p.1. 135 *Autobiography*, Vol.II, p.250-1.
- 136 *The Sword and The Trowel*, 1883, p.262-3.

M. NICHOLLS Tutor, Spurgeon's College, London.

This paper was delivered at the Society's Spurgeon Day Conference in September 1984. The second part will follow in a later issue.

REVIEWS

Faith in the City: A call for action by church and nation, The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, Church House Publishing, 1985. xvi + 398 pp. £7.50.

What a marvellously ambiguous phrase with which to title such an important book! Is faith to be found in the city? Or are we to have faith that the Church of Christ has a ministry to exercise there?

Some years ago, I took a former President of the Baptist Union to a New Town he had not visited before. As we went into the concrete jungle, his face became ashen: 'whoever designed this ought to be put in prison' was all that he could say. We went into one of the 'town houses' that 'graced' the estate, the home of the local Baptist minister. We shared with him his dreams for the community, his hopes for the church and his assurance of the gospel. My companion's riposte as we left the estate was as brief as his comment as we entered it: 'I have changed my mind: whoever designed this place ought to be made to live in it!'

That the church has manifestly failed to make the gospel live in our Inner Cities and other 'Urban Priority Areas' is clear. Is the fault with the church which did not 'stick it out'? Or with the