

MISSION YESTERDAY AND TODAY: CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON 1834 - 1892

Michael K. Nicholls

1. Church Planter

In 1854 a nineteen year old preacher from Cambridgeshire took London by storm. A dwindling and disheartened congregation in Park Street Chapel, south of London Bridge, sprang to life. Hundreds of people flocked to hear the country lad with the extraordinary voice and a fluency to match it. It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, often called the "Prince of preachers,"¹ who in addition to his pulpit ministry and prolific writing began over twenty-five philanthropic organizations and instituted a College for the training of ministers.

Spurgeon's preaching has been evaluated, his writings analysed, his philanthropy considered, and his political involvement summarized. However, it was the role of Pastor/Evangelist which dominated his ministry. Evangelism was at the heart of all that he sought to do. Whether preaching from the pulpit or speaking with individuals, Spurgeon was always an evangelist. The many avenues of evangelical ministry all arose from his consuming "passion for souls."

A precocious child, with a fine and bright spirit, Charles Haddon Spurgeon grew up in a godly rural Essex family. Surrounded by a large Puritan library and spiritually-minded adults, his home life impressed upon him a deep sense both of God's providence and man's sinfulness. A loving, prayerful mother ensured a secure place for the sensitive child within a large family.

He was born on 19 June 1834 in the village of Kelvedon, Essex. Educated at Dame Schools and at the Maidstone Agricultural College, he was destined for a teaching career. In the summer of 1849 he became a junior tutor at Swindell's School in Newmarket, became skilled in Greek and Latin and well-read in Philosophy. In addition he assisted in teaching the younger children. Although still unconverted, the Christian influence of his family had made an indelible impression upon him.² One evening in January 1850 he found assurance of salvation at Eld Lane Baptist Church, Colchester. The text of Isaiah 45:22 drew him to trust in Christ alone for salvation. Four months later he was baptised in the River Lark and when he left Newmarket for Cambridge he joined St Andrew's Street Baptist Church.

Spurgeon became active in Christian service by distributing tracts every Saturday afternoon, visiting some seventy people on a regular basis, endeavouring as he said "to draw their attention to spiritual realities."³ He described his compulsion to serve: "I could scarcely content myself even for five minutes without trying to do something for Christ."⁴

He had an unusual gift for public speaking. Deeply influenced by the theology of John Calvin, the devotion of the English Puritans, the imagination of Hudson Taylor, the faith of George Müller and the preaching of George Whitefield, the multi-faceted career of the finest Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century was about to begin. Compelling and captivating preaching made him a fruitful lay pastor at Waterbeach Baptist Chapel. Spurgeon's whole ministry was characterized by a deep evangelistic commitment. He counted the conversion of a person more precious than anything else, declaring "I would rather be the means of saving a soul from death than be the greatest orator on earth."⁵

This historic church at Park Street, London, was run down and discouraged when he arrived, but within weeks it was crowded to capacity. Respectable middle-class and needy working-class people filled the Chapel each Sunday. During his life he preached to millions and added nearly twelve thousand converts to his London congregation. Industrious, direct, sensitive and with great personal charm, Spurgeon disciplined his converts and cared for his needy flock, forging deep personal friendships. When the new Metropolitan Tabernacle opened it housed the largest congregation in the world. About five thousand people worshipped at each service and enjoyed psalm singing as well as the praying, exposition and proclamation of Spurgeon. Fellowship life was administered by Spurgeon's brother James and a devoted company of elders and deacons. All members were baptized by immersion as a public testimony to faith in Christ, the communion table was open to all believers, and a proliferating network of agencies surrounded an increasingly busy Pastor.

A naturally gifted orator, Spurgeon continually improved his skills through voracious reading and regular practice. Rarely preaching on a series of passages, he chose his weekly texts with great care. Most messages were dictated to his secretaries in the week beforehand, but he actually preached from brief notes written on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. An arresting direct introduction would be followed by a structured message rich in doctrinal affirmation, laced with anecdotal illustrations and proverbs, and concluding with relevant application and earnest appeal. Possessed of an extraordinary voice, the imaginative mind of a poet and the sincerity of a dedicated man, he preached to a sympathetic and prayerful congregation.

His compassionate care and generosity within his own church typified his balanced commitment to evangelism and social care. He supported liberal politics, was active in promoting voluntary educational enterprise, and his interest extended to the unemployed of northern England and the destitute of the cities. His church supported homes for the elderly and free evening classes for under-educated adults. Colporteurs were sent out to offer good Christian literature around the nation.

Next to evangelism, Spurgeon's greatest passion was the planting of new churches. From 1866-1876 one of the main features of the monthly *The Sword and the Trowel* was a report on various churches that had been planted

by students and graduates from the Pastor's College. These reports diminished in the mid-1870's, giving way to reports on the growing and proliferating agencies of the Tabernacle, *i.e.* the orphanage work, the almshouses, colportage and evangelistic associations. By the 1880's most of the reports concerned students who were venturing overseas to engage in a church planting ministry.

2. A Leading Figure

There is no doubt that Spurgeon sits astride the whole enterprise of church growth in London. Twenty-seven new churches were founded by students from the Pastor's College between 1853 and 1867. In the second half of the nineteenth century the number of Baptist churches in London doubled and nearly all of these were founded under Spurgeonic influence of one kind or another. Students were sent out to new areas or existing churches, normally at the command of "the gov'nor." Spurgeon was keen not just to plant missions but also to found churches. It was his enterprising, imaginative, powerful and generous vigour which inspired many to venture out in Christ's name at a propitious time of revival activity.

Spurgeon joined with two other London ministers, Landels of Regent's Park and Brock of Bloomsbury, to found the London Baptist Association, with the clear intention that one new chapel should be erected each year. Both Brock and Landels had planted their churches and commenced local missions, but Spurgeon's vision was London-wide. Every major church planting venture in a particular geographical area requires one person as a catalyst. Spurgeon filled that role.

3. A Needy City

Although Spurgeon said "our design ... knows no geographical limits," he had a particular concern for London. By 1863, of the thirty-eight men sent from the College, eleven settled in London.⁶ Spurgeon saw the strategic significance of London. "Every Christian denomination should be on the alert for London, for it is in some respect the very heart of the world" (1875, p.147). It was also the city in which he laboured. His frequent home visits during the cholera epidemic early in his ministry had a profound effect on him. He saw at first-hand the depravity and depression of people's condition. In Spurgeon's view church planting needed to keep pace with London's development. He urged that "growing villages" (like Cheam) "near London, early be supplied with the gospel of Christ. Being on the spot the friends will be ready for greater things as the population increases" (1871, p.190).

Between 1851 and 1865 the number of chapel seats provided by Baptists in London had increased by sixty-one per cent, a pattern of growth more rapid than that of the Independents (30%) or the Wesleyans (19%). How-

ever, there was a general decline in accommodation space relative to the population despite a total of 219 places of worship (1867, p. 535). He criticized the Dissenters for lacking initiative in church planting, unlike the Anglicans who were usually first on the scene in a new suburb. Spurgeon continued to stress the need to "commence more churches in and around London" and to see them suitably accommodated (1875, p. 147).

4. Convincing Theology

Spurgeon was an evangelical Calvinist who accepted the principles of Calvin's theology, derived mainly from Puritan literature of the seventeenth century. He was inspired by the revival preaching of George Whitefield and the insights of Jonathan Edwards. Spurgeon himself preached as if the destiny of his congregation depended upon that word. He sent out men similarly inspired, believing that they were to go out to find God's elect and to bring them in to their eternal destiny by means of prayer and preaching.

From the outset Spurgeon valued a discourse "not by the approbation of men, nor by the ability of it, but by the effect produced in comforting the saint and awakening the sinner."⁷ This twin aim was the product of his theological understanding, holding in tension the doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, believing that they could never be "welded into one upon any earthly anvil but they certainly shall be one in eternity."⁸ He stated unequivocally that "Calvinism is the gospel and nothing else,"⁹ and in didactic manner argued that Calvin received his view from Augustine, the spiritual successor to the Apostle Paul. Throughout his ministry he was intolerant of the Arminian scheme of free will, but he also steered clear of hyper-Calvinism which he found "too hot-spiced for my palate."¹⁰ He often attacked Roman Catholic and Church of England ideas, criticising their rituals and dogma.

Preaching, for Spurgeon, was "the burden of the Lord."¹¹ He sought constantly for signs of regeneration and sanctification, believing the Word had great power in its effect, constantly reminding the non-Christian of human wretchedness and the remedy to be found only in the cross of Christ. On Spurgeon's memorial stone some lines from a Cowper hymn express the desire of Spurgeon's evangelistic heart:

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply
Redeeming love has been my theme
And shall be till I die.¹²

The Christian was assured of the constant grace of God, yet was still responsible for his own behaviour. Spurgeon, outspoken on "the crying sins of the Time," singled out certain sins so that his hearers would "perceive he speaks of them."¹³ Instantaneous conversions made him glad, but he sought

to make devoted disciples, people who could demonstrate a "thorough work of grace, a deep sense of sin and an effectual wounding of the law."¹⁴ This emphasis on conversion, discipleship and holiness helped create a people prepared to serve God sacrificially.

Calvinistic theology was dogmatically taught at the Pastor's College. The College was founded in 1856 in response to a need for local men who were already engaged in evangelistic preaching to be trained to do it more effectively. Within the College a general education was given to those who needed it, followed by specific ministerial education in biblical and theological studies. The students were required to do little outside the classroom except be available for practical enterprises. They took no university examinations. Living in local communities, they trained both in the classroom and on the job.

The nature of training was vitally important. They were trained in a practical atmosphere long enough for them to gain knowledge but not to lose their evangelistic zeal nor the cutting edge of their proclamation. Spurgeon trained men from all sorts of backgrounds and enabled them to plant churches in needy areas.

5. Corporate Endeavour

Spurgeon did not only wish to send out local evangelists or those who would use missions stations as agencies of social concern, he sought to establish independent churches at the earliest possible juncture.

London was affected by the spiritual awakening in England, particularly in 1859-1860 when about a million were added to the church in England.¹⁵ In terms of churches planted in London, Spurgeon made his greatest impact in the 1860s and 1870s. The number of new London Baptist churches averaged over eight a year between 1856 and 1860, and over eleven a year between 1861 and 1863.¹⁶ By 1878 forty-eight new churches had been planted under his guidance in and around London (1878, p.240-63).

There was a definite strategy. First, evangelistic activity in *ad hoc* places, a major factor in these early enterprises being the prayers and presence of a handful of Christians who sought to establish a church in their locality. With hindsight Spurgeon stated that the work should generally begin in "a hall or other hired building to get together a few people, to gather converts and to struggle on till a small church is formed; then commence the labour collecting money to build a school room or part of a building, or to erect an iron chapel, and when this is accomplished, the chapel is undertaken..." (1878, p. 238). Many Baptist writers have supposed that most of the churches planted in the period 1860-1870 were "isolated at first."¹⁷ This assertion lacks evidence. Inter-church life was fostered by the *esprit de corps* which existed between Spurgeon's men. Although the College was too large for all to know one another and the students were actively pursuing their own styles of evangelism, they attended each other's fund-raising teas

and induction services, underlining links of fellowship. This was enhanced by the formation of a Student Association. The College Conference and the Ministers' Orphan Fund were indicative of a strong sense of kindred spirit (1875, p. 253). The corporate nature of church planting was stressed from the outset. Students were first assigned to be with an older preacher so that they could catch his spirit and learn from his experience. Over this period the important role of evangelist was kept to the fore and the closest co-operation between minister and evangelist was emphasized, challenging the traditional assumption of one-man ministry. When a man was sent to work in new areas, others were always involved as a pioneer group. For instance, by 1878 J. Cox celebrated the first anniversary of the Baptist cause in Penge, commenting: "zealous workers have been found to co-operate in the undertaking" (1867, p. 45). This concept of church planting by "microcosmic churches" led to the formation of many ancillary evangelistic agencies at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. They were an important source of manpower, pumping life through the arteries into the whole movement.

There was a distinct note of militancy in church planting operations. For many of the College students missions were a Holy War. In a similar vein to William Booth, Spurgeon declared "when you bewail the world's iniquity...weeping will do nothing without action."¹⁸ He exhorted everyone to get involved in the fight. The East London Tabernacle was commended in *The Sword and the Trowel* as an "aggressive Church, and is daily reaping the reward of its holy enterprise" (1876, p. 365). In East London's Providence Chapel there was a mission body one hundred strong who were "emphatically an aggressive corps who do the real sapper and miner work of the Church in a common sense effective way" (1876, p. 175). The earnest evangelist is "persistent. He knows no discouragement. He recognizes no hindrances" (1867, p. 271).

Much of the human responsibility for the success of the work rested on the shoulders of the students themselves, for Spurgeon organized and developed evangelists who did the groundwork and took the initiative. These pioneers became "jacks-of-all-trades" until a church had grown sufficiently. To facilitate their churches' growth they mobilized members. In 1867 the Metropolitan Tabernacle could boast at least two hundred and fifty members who were evangelists, loan tract distributors, missionaries or Bible women, and others supported a host of other agencies. Other churches followed suit (1867, p.175). Patterns of church planting were being established and lessons applied quickly in new pioneer situations. Leadership was provided as more became willing to assume responsibility in church life. In July 1867, for example, the members of Romney Street Chapel gave their first annual report of the mission connected with that place of worship. Every Sunday morning people took regular informal services at six lodging houses, rising to twelve by the end of the year. Forty-six open air services were conducted each summer Sunday afternoon. Sixty thousand tracts were distributed to every house in the neighbourhood and to hospitals,

including the Westminster, which was visited by female members who distributed books to patients (1867, p. 334).

Endless initiative was employed in evangelism (1867, p. 535). By the end of the 1870's Spurgeon's pragmatic church planting operations were vindicated: within twenty-five years he had made a unique and lasting contribution to London Baptist life (1875, p. 167).

6. Varied Methods

Necessity justified every method of Christian service in Spurgeon's view. He had no time for respectability which shirks "what faith and works perform" (1867, p. 391). In *The Sword and the Trowel* two men were commended when they had paid for two pews and went out inviting people in, thus adding twenty-four to the congregations that morning (1870, p. 129). Holy boldness was an essential part of faith.

Specialist outreach was developed, for instance, among Chelsea pensioners and others with particular needs. In the fine weather, open air preaching was firmly advocated because confining the Gospel within buildings had no "apostolic precedent."¹⁹ Open air preaching was linked to church services so that hearers could respond appropriately. Such work heightened public awareness and produced converts. Mr. Linnekar of Peckham formed a church of forty-one members in 1870 through this method, and Peniel Tabernacle, Chalk Farm Road, also grew in this way (1878, p. 261, 245).

In the winter months theatre preaching was particularly popular. People who felt culturally estranged from traditional places of worship, even "the most sinful and vile that the east of London could produce," would come to listen to the gospel in such places as the Pavilion Theatre. The preaching was brief, simple and well-illustrated (1869, p. 405).

Literature evangelism was another popular means of disseminating the gospel, but it is hard to assess its effectiveness. Colportage was the means of selling Bibles and appropriate literature from door to door. In London this was mainly done by Bible women and city missionaries. Loan tract societies were also established. This work permeated localities with Christian knowledge and values, as well as providing people with a constant reminder of the Christian gospel (1878, p. 265).

Sunday Schools were a strong focal point for evangelism. The children learnt the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic and the elements of the Christian faith. Classes, soon over-subscribed, proved an invaluable local point of contact. Chapels outgrown by the church were frequently used for the Sunday School.

Evangelism by College men included social care. Spurgeon was a genuine friend of the poor and they were prepared to listen to him. His men commended themselves by example. Many churches set up Benevolent

Societies. At Providence Chapel thirty-two tract visitors started subscribing to a fund to help the most distressing cases they met. In one year the young single-sex Bible classes raised £100 for it (1876, p.174). The minister's wife, Mrs. Cuff, took Bible studies for "street idlers" and prostitutes. Churches provided occasional feasts for those living in lodging houses. Many churches used free teas followed by simple earnest preaching. Other societies sprang up within church life like the Band of Hope, promoting abstinence from alcohol among the young and making a stand against the drunkenness of the day.

Many churches revived older struggling causes but, since people form a church, many revived churches became in reality new. In such causes the pioneers, in addition to the pressures of creating a new work, had to harmonize existing members' views with their own vision and methods. Spurgeon observed that the revival of a church was "often a more difficult task than to commence a new one" (1878, p.264). The most successful revived churches were listed in the 1873 *The Sword and the Trowel*. Others in strife or difficulty were sensitively omitted. Their development differed little from that of new foundations. For instance, Barking Baptist Church was helped by student preachers between 1871 and 1874 until Mr. Tomkins became pastor. By 1877 membership had risen from 27 to 102, the congregation had trebled and the building had been enlarged (1878, p.266).

In the first decade of the College's life men trained there had baptized 20,676 people and the gross increase of members in their churches was 30,677.²⁰ One reason for the success lay in Spurgeon's concept of the Church. He believed churches ought to be self-supporting and self-governing, with active fellowship links with other churches. No administrative hierarchy of a huge church planting organization emerged. Both the College and the Metropolitan Tabernacle wanted to remain sponsors of mission rather than head a defined, internally-organized association of churches. Flexibility and speed in decision making was possible, without constant reference back to a higher body. Pioneers were free to develop each church in a manner appropriate to the locality. No condition was laid on the new church by the College, although churches usually felt "a grateful tie binding them to the fostering mother" (1878, p.239). Churches were at liberty to appoint a minister from another college if so desired. Spurgeon repudiated the idea of isolated independency, believing in a mixture of Baptist and Presbyterian ecclesiology.²¹ Few administrative bottle-necks existed in church planting operations. The disadvantage was uncoordinated planning and sometimes a lack of immediate support for causes in difficulty.

7. Adequate Buildings

Spurgeon was convinced that, once a handful of converts had been gathered, the essential need was to raise money for a building. He maintained that "experience proves that without a home of their own churches do not rise into

a vigorous condition"(1878, p.257). Initially this could be a functional structure and something better might be erected later. He believed that the establishment of a building not only gave opportunity for new enterprises on behalf of the church but also gave the local Christians a sense of belonging together in a particular place in the cause of Christ. He believed in building churches *and* church buildings. Some began in rented rooms in public houses, as did the Baptist churches in Wandsworth, Enfield and Ealing. Fashionable lecture halls might be used for Sunday services such as the large hall of the Angel Town Institute or the Royal Hill Lecture Hall in Greenwich. Other churches began in a rented, dilapidated wooden building (Streatham), under a railway arch (Peckham), in a carpenter's shop (Kennington) and in private rooms (Penge). Wesleyans and Congregationalists allowed Spurgeon's men to use their empty or under-utilized buildings. One student, Frank Smith, boldly hired Duncombe Road Chapel and within four years had a thriving church in Hornsey Rise. By contrast, Barnes Baptist Church was constructed at the instigation of a wealthy gentleman and then W.H.Pritter, a College student, was asked to gather a congregation there (1878, p.240-70). Many churches were housed temporarily in iron chapels rapidly constructed and requiring little land, with the longer-term aim of moving into a permanent building. By the 1870's Baptists had begun to etch themselves on London's skyline. Sir Samuel Morton Peto, a leading Baptist and a liberal donor, shared Spurgeon's preference for strategic, high-profile siting for these new buildings. Large "dissenting cathedrals" and commodious chapels reflected the growing confident optimism of the denomination (1878, p.241).

8. Financial Fellowship

Various financial schemes were promoted by Spurgeon to facilitate the construction of churches. In 1864 the Metropolitan Tabernacle established a loan building reserve fund administered by the deacons to aid debt reduction, make possible necessary repair work and finance new building projects. By 1877 the fund amounted to around £5,000 (1878, p.272). Spurgeon was also instrumental in establishing a building fund within the London Baptist Association. Personally generous, he appealed publicly for sums of money, embarrassed only when it was not forthcoming. Lists of contributors, large and small, were published, although anonymity could be preserved. Much was owed to Mr. W. Higgs, a deacon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, who owned a building company and built many large and small chapels at cost price.

In poor districts it proved burdensome to plant churches and erect chapels simultaneously, taxing even the most committed of men. Spurgeon argued that practical and financial help to erect a chapel was "the safest and best mode of aiding a working-class Church" (1878, p.244). Limited funds

were made available on a discretionary basis, taking into account the efforts made by the Church to raise funds itself. Stepney Green received £500 for a building costing £3,500, but this debt was speedily discharged. Mr. Beecliff formed a church in Depford Library Institute and raised £100 for a chapel; a further £100 was made available from the Fund. Spurgeon spurred on Mr. Spanswick who led a work in the Camberwell Claremont Rooms, telling him "it is high time to begin providing a permanent home" (1866, p.228-9). At Shooters Hill, Blackheath, Spurgeon counselled caution, for they were too few in number to afford the venture.

Chapel-begging was an acceptable means of raising support from business or wealthy people. Through such means Archibald Brown of the East London Tabernacle raised £2,000 within a month. The remaining £10,000 was collected after thousands of leaflets appealing for aid were distributed worldwide with the stamp bill alone amounting to £500 (1876, p.363).

In 1875 *The Freeman* pressed for a comprehensive report of chapel debts. An earlier partial return from London had shown that "every church member was having to pay an average of two shillings per annum in interest alone."²² It is hard to assess whether Spurgeon was partly responsible for "loading our denomination with buildings disproportionate both to our needs and our resources," for he stressed both the need for church buildings and for prudence. Financial advice was available from Spurgeon who stated "when our men run before us they usually run into debt..." (1878, p.245). Nevertheless, the building of permanent places of worship ensured a regular meeting place, gave scope for diverse activities and firmly established Baptist church life in a community. Such churches provided some social stability in areas where there was considerable flux in the population.

9. Persevering Spirit

Spurgeon remarked that "the difficulty of founding churches, and especially of building chapels, can only be known by those who have experienced it" (1878, p.238). A large amount of evangelistic work sometimes produced no church organization, only a handful of converts. In fact Spurgeon expected such cases, given his theological and practical perspective, saying that they had sought "to do little where we could not do much" (1866, p.227,229). This pragmatic attitude, not to be bound to "uncongenial spots," was only a guideline. In practice the assessment of the tension between perseverance and accepted failure was difficult. Consequently there were some churches like Shooters Hill Chapel where "after much anxious toil and many discouragements a Church numbering ten members was at last formed" (1878, p.251). Nearby South Street, Greenwich, took twenty years of "patient and unwearied toil" before a building could be erected and the members moved out of Royal Hill Lecture Hall (1878, p.242).

Spurgeon did not fear the multiplicity of churches in close proximity to one another. When he helped to develop a church in Norwood New Town in 1879, Chatsworth Baptist Church, formed a year earlier a mile away, sent a letter of protest.²³ A more clearly defined geographical strategy may have been needed but he viewed the task of mission, rather than church conciliation, as the greater good. True to conviction, Spurgeon supplied preachers to Upton Chapel and a Mr. W. Williams preached there and "attracted a considerable congregation almost under the shadow of the Metropolitan Tabernacle."²⁴

Did Spurgeon's success depend primarily on transfer growth rather than conversions, thereby reducing manpower and morale in smaller churches? Whenever there is a new work of God some Christians, bored or frustrated with their own church situations, seek to be involved in what appears to be marked by success. So London Christians, individually or in small groups, sought either membership at the Metropolitan Tabernacle or Spurgeon's advice. If attempted reconciliation of seceding groups to their former churches failed, Spurgeon did not allow them to drift but endeavoured to use them "for the increase of the Church" (1878, p.246). However, Spurgeon believed it a "burning disgrace" in a pastor if his "pastoral care is composed of members whom he has stolen from other Christian churches."²⁵ On examination of his own long pastorate, 14,691 were received into fellowship after baptism at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and of these 5,211 were in membership in 1892, indicating the massive flux of this church population.²⁶

In this period many other agencies sought to address the spiritual needs of the people, including such cults as the Mormons and the Spiritualists. In April 1863 Bishop Tait sought to raise £1,000,000 in ten years to provide more Anglican ministers for the increased population, particularly in the poorer London areas (1870, p.223). *The Times* pointedly remarked that "the spiritual conquest of the populations is not to be made by advancing a succession of ecclesiastical fortresses," but these churches often served a useful purpose in reaching people with the gospel. In contrast W. J. Orsman created a remarkable diverse mission in Golden Lane, arguing that "there is not good substitute for voluntary organized evangelical labour." Many groups harnessed some of the vast potential in Christian churches. In the East End many missions date from this time. In Bow, Grattan Guinness aimed at providing workers for the East End. In 1872 he founded the East London Institute which within sixteen years had trained eight hundred men, many of whom remained in London, founding or strengthening Baptist churches.²⁷ The London City Mission did tremendous work and many of its converts joined Baptist churches, which Spurgeon duly acknowledged.

William Booth began the Salvation Army in 1865 and, amidst much opposition, was successful both in preaching the gospel and recruiting men and women for sacrificial service. Prolific works were rapidly initiated as the Army mobilized the strength of its movement, contrasting with the way the independence of Baptist churches limited their organization of resources

and men. The Roman Catholic Church with its large bases in and around the city also served London's needy.

Spurgeon fitted into the wider contemporary Christian concern for mission: his distinct contribution lay in his style of church planting. The establishment of a ministerial training college to plant churches, linked organically to an extremely large and powerful church, proved a successful combination with Baptists at grass roots level. In 1877 the annual return revealed that 208 Baptist churches had grown by an average of eleven members per church; but this included the work of the Metropolitan churches which had grown on average by twenty members per year, indicating the relative effectiveness of Spurgeon's men (1878, p.271). He sought neither to establish a new denomination nor a para-church movement, but perceived that potential was best developed through the founding of independent Baptist churches which, given time, could reproduce themselves. Some have argued that Spurgeon possessed the organizing ability of a John Wesley and the burning eloquence of a George Whitefield. Whether this is true or not, Spurgeon always operated in a corporate context: much attributed to Spurgeon should rightly be associated with the leaders of the Tabernacle and the College and with the pioneers' own resourcefulness.

¹James Douglas, *The Prince of Preachers*, n.d. This is a biography of Spurgeon utilizing this popular motif.

²Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, Worthing 1903, pg.43.

³W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Biography*, 1920, p.41.

⁴C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4 vols., 1890, I, p.156.

⁵*The Sword and the Trowel*, 1866, p.28. Subsequent references to this major source are given in brackets in the text.

⁶M. K. Nicholls, *Some Aspects of Protestant Pastoral Training in London*, (unpublished London M.Th. thesis), 1979, p.65.

⁷*Autobiography*, I p.531.

⁸*Ibid.*, p.174.

⁹*Ibid.*, p.168.

¹⁰J. C. Carlile, *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography*, 1933, p.102.

¹¹*Autobiography*, I, p.403.

¹²*Ibid.*, II, photograph opposite p.307.

¹³*Ibid.*, I, p.537.

¹⁴Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 1966, p.112.

¹⁵E. W. Hayden, *Spurgeon on Revival*, Grand Rapids 1962, p.40.

¹⁶W. T. Whitley, *The Baptists of London*, 1928, p.79.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁸*Autobiography*, I, p.154.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.216.

²⁰Carlile, *op.cit.*, p.174.

²¹*Ibid.*, p.216.

²²E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 1959, pp.103, 109.

²³Nicholls, *op.cit.*, p.68.

²⁴Carlile, *op.cit.*, p.183.

²⁵*Autobiography*, I, p.39.

²⁶Carlile, *op.cit.*, p.267.

²⁷Whitley, *op.cit.*, p.79.

Michael K. Nicholls is presently the pastor of Bromley Baptist Church in Kent, England. He previously taught Church History at Spurgeon's College in London, England, from 1976-1991, where he also served as Vice-Principal from 1986-1991. This present article is reprinted with permission from Mission To The World: Essays to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ordination of George Raymond Beasley-Murray to the Christian Ministry, edited by Paul Beasley-Murray, which appeared in 1991 as a supplement to the Baptist Quarterly, the publication of the Baptist Historical Society, Baptist House, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon, England OX11 8RT.