

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

**The One Balm for All Earth's Wounds: The Priority of Gospel Proclamation in Charles
Haddon Spurgeon's Missiology**

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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To Suzy,
my gracious wife and partner in ministry,
I love you

There will be oppression unless the gospel is spread. This is the one balm for all earth's wounds...Oh, let us then, since this is the best thing that can be, show our love to God and man by spreading his saving truth.

- Charles Spurgeon

The tendency among some evangelicals to downplay verbal proclamation...demands a fresh call for evangelicals to emphasize the urgency of proactive evangelism. And if talk of priority will help the church to a fresh commitment, then so be it.

- Ajith Fernando

Not only does the Bible say over and over that the gospel is spread by preaching, but common sense tells us that loving deeds, as important as they are as an accompaniment of preaching, cannot by themselves bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

- Timothy Keller

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

- Matthew 16:26

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Charles Spurgeon is usually remembered as the greatest preacher of nineteenth-century Victorian London. However, as David Kingdon says, “He was more than that. He was also a man of social concern and social action.”¹ Spurgeon’s preaching ministry did not eclipse his view of those who were suffering. He was committed to preaching the gospel, but he was also committed to addressing physical needs – a facet of his ministry that is not as widely known or appreciated as his preaching ministry. Gospel proclamation and social ministries were not in competition with one another in Spurgeon’s mind, but he did have a clear sense as to how these two types of ministry should be related to one another in the mission of the church.

As this chapter will demonstrate, the contemporary church is faced with several competing options regarding how to define her mission in the world. Views differ among missiologists concerning the nature and task of the church’s mission, creating some confusion and unnecessary division among evangelicals engaged in the study and practice of mission.² Because the contemporary church lacks a clear vision concerning what her mission is, this dissertation will use Spurgeon’s approach to missions as an apologetic for a biblically precise missiology, namely, one that prioritizes gospel proclamation without neglecting the physical

¹David Kingdon, “Spurgeon and His Social Concern,” in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 91.

²This dissertation defines “evangelical” using David Bebbington’s well-known definition. He says that there are “four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together [these] form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.” David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730’s to the 1980’s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3, italics his. Cf. idem., “Evangelicalism in Its Settings: The British and American Movements since 1940,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond*, ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 366-67.

needs of those who suffer. Spurgeon's benevolent prioritism will be put forward in order to encourage and challenge contemporary missiologists and mission practitioners to rethink the relationship between gospel proclamation and social ministry.

Spurgeon was not a missiologist and he did not have any cross-cultural missions experience. He was a pastor and a preacher. However, contemporary missiologists and mission practitioners should not be quick to dismiss the missiological insights that can be gleaned from pastors. Mission scholars and others can benefit from the missiological ideas of pastors. This has proven true in the early twenty-first century, as countless missiologists and mission practitioners have benefited from the missiological thought of pastors such as John Piper, Timothy Keller, and David Platt.³ Likewise, Spurgeon, as a pastor who still demands a hearing from modern-day evangelicals, can provide needed clarification concerning the contemporary church's mission. Therefore, how Spurgeon articulated the mission of the church, and how he worked to fulfill it, will be the governing questions of this project.

a. Statement of Research Question and Thesis

This dissertation will explore the relationship between gospel proclamation and social ministry in Spurgeon's ministry. He did both effectively, but how he viewed the relationship between gospel proclamation and social action, or between word and deed ministry, will be the central question guiding the research that follows. This dissertation will attempt to answer this question by using the modern missiological categories and distinctions found in the word versus deed, holism versus prioritism, and incarnationalism versus representationalism discussions,

³See John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Timothy Keller *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), idem., *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); and David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2010).

arguing that Spurgeon's approach to missions was word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational. In other words, this dissertation will argue that Spurgeon's various ministries were primarily oriented towards proclaiming the gospel⁴ and making disciples, and secondarily oriented towards addressing social concerns. Spurgeon's social conscience did not prevent him from prioritizing gospel proclamation over social action. This dissertation will demonstrate that, though he cared for people's physical and spiritual needs, he did not hesitate to prioritize the latter over the former.

Before proceeding, an important admission must be made. Spurgeon did not use the terminology that dominates the current discussion of word and deed ministry in contemporary missiology. Categories like word and deed ministry, holism, prioritism, incarnationalism, and representationalism were not used by Spurgeon when discussing the relationship between gospel proclamation and social ministry. Although he did not use these terms that are currently in vogue, this dissertation will argue that he had clear convictions concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry, that he thought in terms of prioritizing the former over the latter, and that he believed that Christians were called to represent Jesus in the world, not incarnate him.

⁴In order to prevent confusion concerning how Spurgeon defined the gospel, here is how he defines it in his own words: "I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word *Substitution* – Christ standing in the stead of man. If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost for ever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin every day, but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, 'There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you.'" *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 1 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 113, italics his.

b. Definition of General Terms

Before the more specific categories of word and deed, holism and prioritism, and incarnationalism and representationalism are defined, a few general terms need to be briefly defined. Because this project is exploring issues of Christian mission and missiology, and because there is some debate over the meaning and usage of these terms, these terms need to be clearly defined in order to avoid misunderstanding. The terms “mission,” “missions,” “missional,” and “missiology” will now be defined.

i. Mission and Missions

These two terms are derived from the Latin term *mitto*, which is a translation of the Greek term *apostello*, which means, “to send.” These terms have no direct biblical equivalent, and thus have “a broad range of acceptable meanings.”⁵ The terms are not used uniformly in missiological literature, leading to an ongoing debate among evangelical missiologists concerning how they should be defined. The central issue in the debate is whether the two terms should be defined separately or considered synonymous. Scott Moreau points out that there was no distinction made between the terms until the mid-1900s. Until that time, the preferred term was “missions.” The International Missionary Council, however, stated that the biblical idea of mission “was not limited to what the church was doing, since God has always been active everywhere in the world.”⁶ Since that time, the word “missions” has predominantly been used to refer to the specific work of the church (and parachurch agencies) in taking the gospel across

⁵A. Scott Moreau, “Mission and Missions,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 636.

⁶A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 17.

cultures, while “mission” has been given a much broader definition. “Mission” now refers to “everything the church is doing that points toward the kingdom of God.”⁷

Leading missiologist Timothy Tennent also prefers to define these two terms separately. He defines “mission” as “God’s redemptive, historical initiative on behalf of his creation,” and “missions” as “all the specific and varied ways in which the church crosses cultural boundaries to reflect the life of the triune God in the world.”⁸ Tennent’s definitions are perhaps indicative of an emerging consensus among contemporary missiologists concerning the definition of these terms. For example, the late David Bosch differentiated between “mission” and “missions.” In his magisterial work *Transforming Mission*, he says, “We have to distinguish between *mission* (singular) and *missions* (plural). The first refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God’s mission), that is, God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate,” whereas “*Missions*...refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *missio Dei*.”⁹

The desire to clearly distinguish between the mission of God and the mission of the church is why these scholars are seeking to define these terms separately instead of conflating them or using them synonymously. Tennent aptly summarizes this desire: “*Mission* is far more

⁷Ibid.

⁸Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010), 59.

⁹David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 10, italics his. Similarly, Christopher Wright, in his magisterial work *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, says that he is “dissatisfied” with the current usage of the word “mission.” He is opposed to the view of “mission” as solely related to what man does, and argues for the “theological priority” of the mission of God. He defines “mission” as “our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation.” In other words, according to Wright, “mission flows from and participates in the mission of God.” Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22-23.

about *God* and *who He is* than about *us* and *what we do*.”¹⁰ He also points out, however, that the understanding of “mission” and the *missio dei* by the ecumenical movement of the 1950’s and 1960’s, though “fundamentally sound,” did result in misunderstanding and misapplication. He says that the problem of their (i.e. the ecumenical movement’s) understanding of mission was an “undue separation of God’s mission from the church.”¹¹ Tennent insightfully reminds those within the ecumenical movement that “it is one thing to propose that mission should not be a subset of the doctrine of the church,” but “it is entirely another to disconnect the *missio dei* altogether from a robust ecclesiology.”¹² God’s mission, he argues, must be tethered to the church, as the church “is central, not ancillary, to His mission.”¹³ This way of defining the terms “mission” and “missions” produces a God-centered and church-focused approach to missions.

When “mission” and “missions” are differentiated, several questions immediately follow. Moreau points out three: What is the scope of the mission? What tasks are considered a part of the mission? Should there be a priority for mission, and if so, what should it be?¹⁴ The church has wrestled with the scope and task of its mission for centuries,¹⁵ and the debate concerning the need to prioritize aspects of the mission continues to the present day. Moreau points out that the answers to these three questions were “relatively straight forward” for evangelicals until the middle of the last century. Until the Willingen Conference in 1952 (sponsored by the

¹⁰Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 55, italics his.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 56.

¹²*Ibid.*, italics his.

¹³*Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴Moreau, “Mission and Missions,” 636.

¹⁵See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pt. 2, for a good discussion concerning how the church has historically viewed mission.

International Missionary Council), evangelicals believed that “missions was evangelism and the evidence of successful missions was the extension of the local church through the crossing of cultural, geographic, and linguistic boundaries.”¹⁶ As noted above, this changed as the ecumenical movement began to emphasize that God’s mission was broader than the mission of the church, which indirectly led to a fracturing of the evangelical consensus concerning the definition of mission.

Many evangelicals have willingly accepted key insights from the ecumenical movement, most notably the distinguishing of the mission of God from the mission of the church, and since several evangelical scholars have provided biblical warrant for this acceptance,¹⁷ there seems to be a growing consensus among evangelical missiologists that these two terms should be differentiated, rather than used interchangeably. There remains some vagueness regarding mission and missions, and Zane Pratt is right when he says, “‘Missions’ has become a vague concept,”¹⁸ but the essential definitions of mission and missions seem to be solidifying among contemporary missiologists.

Therefore, it seems that the best way forward for evangelicals in defining these important terms is to agree with Tennent, Wright, and Bosch that “mission” and “missions” should be differentiated, so as to avoid confusion concerning God’s role and the church’s role in missions. As Tennent noted, “mission” is what God does and “missions” is what the church does. Defining these terms in this way preserves the God-centered and church-focused nature of missions and

¹⁶Moreau, “Mission and Missions,” 636.

¹⁷E. g. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*.

¹⁸Zane Pratt, “The Heart of the Task,” in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices for the 21st Century*, ed. Mike Barnett and Robin Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 130.

holds in proper balance the key insights gained from the ecumenical movement, while also avoiding the deficient ecclesiology of the movement.

This discussion of the definitions of “mission” and “missions” may seem out of place for a dissertation on Spurgeon’s missiology. However, this discussion has been given in order to provide the reader with some parameters for how these terms are currently used, and also to alert the reader of the conflation of the meaning of these terms that will inevitably be found in Spurgeon, as he lived and ministered before the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century and the insights that it spawned.

ii. Missional

The term “missional” will not have much bearing on this project, but since it is a common term in popular parlance, and because it is used in much of the current missiological literature, a brief survey of definitions will be offered. Tennent gives a basic definition of the term, without going into its various connotations. He says, “*Missional* is an adjectival form of *mission* indicating something that is characterized by mission.”¹⁹ Christopher Wright concurs: “*Missional* is simply an adjective denoting something that is related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes or dynamics of mission.”²⁰

Charles Van Engen provides some connotations of the term “missional” when he says that the term emphasizes “the essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people...the term sees the church as the instrument of God’s mission in God’s world.”²¹ In

¹⁹Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 59, italics his.

²⁰Wright, *The Mission of God*, 24, italics his.

²¹Charles Van Engen, “‘Mission’ Defined and Described,” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 24; cf. Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 11.

other words, he uses the term as more than an adjective to describe something that the church does, but rather, following Leslie Newbigin and others, he uses the term “missional” to define the essence of the church, or what the church is. Scholars such as Van Engen argue that the church is inherently missional because the church exists as a result of, and for the purpose of, the mission of God.²²

iii. Missiology

Since this dissertation will be examining Spurgeon’s missiology, several complementary definitions of missiology will now be given. Christopher Wright’s definition is perhaps the most straightforward: “Missiology is the study of mission. It includes biblical, theological, historical, contemporary, and practical reflection and research.”²³ In the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Alan Neely defines missiology as “the conscious, intentional, ongoing reflection on the doing of mission. It includes theory(ies) of mission, the study and teaching of mission, as well as the research, writing, and publication of works regarding mission.”²⁴ He also notes that missiology is a relatively young discipline, as “the *doing* of mission...preceded by several centuries the *scholarly reflection* on mission.”²⁵ After pointing out that missiology is “a branch of the discipline of Christian theology,” David Bosch says that “for the sake of the Christian mission, it [is] necessary to subject every definition and every manifestation of the Christian

²²The missional church movement begun by The Gospel and Our Culture Network embodies the principles discussed here and is considered by some as the way forward for the church in North America. See Guder, *Missional Church*; Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led By the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007); and Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006). For a critique of the missional church movement, see Keith E. Eitel, “On Becoming Missional: Interacting with Charles Van Engen,” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, chap. 3.

²³Wright, *The Mission of God*, 25.

²⁴Alan Neely, “Missiology,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 633.

²⁵*Ibid.*, italics his.

mission to rigorous analysis and appraisal.”²⁶ This work of analyzing and appraising the various features of the Christian mission is fundamental to the task of missiology.

It must be pointed out again that Spurgeon was not a missiologist. He was a pastor and a preacher, not a scholar. He did not devote much time to analyzing or appraising the nature of Christian missions, and he did not publish any kind of formal treatise on missions. In other words, Spurgeon did not study missions in a formal way. His entire ministry, however, was driven by a commitment to missions. Therefore, in an indirect way, Spurgeon did have a missiology, a way of viewing the nature and task of missions, despite the fact that he never wrote it out in any formal way. His missiology is embedded in his sermons, books, and monthly magazine, and when the pieces are mined out and put together, a biblically robust missiology is produced.

c. Specific Categories

This section will define and describe the specific categories that are commonly used in missiological discussions concerning the relationship between gospel proclamation and social ministry. The goal of this section is not to give an exhaustive analysis and critique of the various positions, but only to outline the broad contours of the contemporary discussion. The following explanation of categories will allow this dissertation to analyze and evaluate Spurgeon’s ministry with clear missiological categories in mind. The categories of word and deed ministry will now be discussed.

²⁶Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 9.

i. Word Versus Deed Ministry

It is helpful to think of the categories of word and deed ministry as the umbrella that covers the other categories of holism, prioritism, incarnationalism, and representationalism. In other words, the latter four categories are ways of explaining the various views concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry. For example, holism is one way of explaining the relationship between word and deed ministry, not an alternative to word or deed ministry.

1. Word Ministry Word ministry, at its most basic level, is concerned with proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ verbally. A common synonym for word ministry is evangelism. Donald McGavran defines evangelism as “proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and Savior and persuading men to become his disciples and responsible members of his church.”²⁷ Thus, word ministry, or evangelism, is what happens when the saving message of Jesus is extended to those who are without him in order to make disciples and build his church.

Central to an understanding of word ministry is the idea that the gospel is inherently a verbal message. As the preamble to “The Cape Town Commitment” says, “The gospel is not a concept that needs fresh ideas, but a story that needs fresh telling.”²⁸ The gospel is a story, and stories are meant to be told, thus word ministry is inherently a verbal endeavor. Duane Litfin says that if one accepts Paul’s summary of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 as a shorthand summary of the gospel, then “it becomes immediately apparent that it is impossible to communicate such a message nonverbally,” as “The cognitive content of the message renders

²⁷Donald A. McGavran, “The Dimensions of World Evangelization,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 94.

²⁸*The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith, A Call to Action*, ed. Darrell Bock (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 9.

this an impossibility.”²⁹ Therefore, according to the Bible, the gospel is inherently a verbal message full of cognitive content, and thus must be communicated verbally. This is the main idea behind word ministry. It should be pointed out, however, that word ministry consists of the multitudinous ways one can share, speak, or proclaim the gospel to another person. This proclamation can be in written or oral form.³⁰ Word ministry happens anytime a person uses words to proclaim the gospel to another person or group of people.

Advocates of word ministry do not deny that there is a non-verbal component to one’s witness for Christ, but they emphasize that the gospel is inherently a verbal message, and thus must be proclaimed verbally. Litfin argues that there are important distinctions between the Christian’s verbal and non-verbal witness. He says, “Our actions can express many things. They can communicate how we *feel* about the gospel, or our attitude toward our listeners, or whether we are someone they should be willing to listen to. But communicating the gospel itself requires words and sentences and paragraphs.”³¹ Thus, word ministry is primarily concerned with the verbal sharing of the gospel using words in any of the countless ways that words may be used, but word ministry does not dismiss the non-verbal aspect of a Christian’s witness for Christ. Christians are called to demonstrate the gospel non-verbally in their daily lives. This non-verbal witness is sometimes referred to as deed ministry, which will now be discussed.

2. Deed ministry Deed ministry, at its most basic level, is concerned with demonstrating the gospel of Jesus Christ non-verbally. There are several terms used synonymously to refer to

²⁹Duane Litfin, *Word vs. Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 36.

³⁰Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 75.

³¹Litfin, *Word vs. Deed*, 44, italics his.

deed ministry. Some of these are “social ministry,” “social action,” or “mercy ministry.” These types of ministries focus on meeting the physical needs of people, and can consist of anything from feeding the hungry to teaching English.

As noted above, Duane Litfin has made it abundantly clear that the gospel is inherently a verbal message and thus must be proclaimed verbally. However, he goes on to insist that Christians are called to live “gospel-worthy” lives (Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:12). He delineates five areas of application in which this is to take place: in one’s personal life, in one’s family, among God’s people, in society at large, and in the natural world.³² Litfin points out that in most discussions of deed ministry, the focus is on the Christian’s responsibility to society-at-large, while the other four dimensions of the Christian’s social responsibility are taken for granted or ignored.³³ He points out that the Christian’s first obligation is to love, worship, and serve God, and that if one’s social obligations are going to be fulfilled aright, they must be an outworking of this central duty of loving and worshipping God.

Litfin’s second area of application concerns the Christian’s duty to their own family. This can be found in commandments such as “Honor your father and your mother” (Deut. 5:16), or in Paul’s admonition to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:8, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” The Bible thus makes it clear that a Christian has social obligations to their family.

The third area of application in which a Christian is to live a “gospel-worthy” life is towards God’s people. Litfin perceptively notes, “The vast majority of the Bible’s instructions

³²Litfin, *Word vs. Deed*, 83ff. Ronald Sider says that there are three types, or areas, of social concern: relief, development, and structural change. *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 138-39. It is important to note that all three of Sider’s types of social concern relate to the Christian’s obligation to society-at-large. His work neglects the other important arenas of life in which the Christian has social responsibilities.

³³Litfin, *Word vs. Deed*, 83-84.

concerning the believer's social obligations are focused here."³⁴ Many of the biblical texts used to justify social ministry to society at large are, in their original context, directions for God's people to care for one another (e.g., Matt. 24:31-46). Old Testament texts, with the exceptions of Proverbs and Job, typically focus "Israel's social obligations in-house."³⁵ In Scripture, after one's family, the social obligations of the gospel apply to God's people, not to society-at-large.

The fourth area of application is the Christian's broader social obligations. Galatians 6:10 is a foundational text here: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." This text says that Christians should "especially" consider the needs of other Christians, but it also says that Christians should "do good to everyone." Litfin says that one must honestly admit that the Bible "does not itself spend much time exploring in any specific way the believer's obligations in this fourth realm."³⁶ The Old Testament writers, Jesus in the Gospels, or Paul in his Letters do not give specific instructions for how this aspect of a Christian's social obligations should look like in practice.³⁷

Although the Bible is relatively silent on how the believer should engage society-at-large, it would be wrong to assume that believers bear no obligation toward those outside of the believing community. Litfin notes five ways that the believer should engage those outside the believing community: by applying godly wisdom, by loving ones neighbor, by building the

³⁴Ibid., 86.

³⁵Ibid., 88.

³⁶Ibid., 90.

³⁷Litfin says, "The New Testament is filled with instructions about our personal lives and our obligations within the family and the church. But beyond a few general instructions about loving and praying for one's enemies, or the apostle's 'Let every person be subject to the governing authorities' (Rom. 13:1; cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-14), the New Testament is silent on the topic of the believer's social obligations to those outside the church." Ibid., 93. For this reason, it is odd that much of the contemporary discussion concerning deed ministry is focused on a Christian's obligations to society at large.

kingdom, by adorning the gospel, and by stewarding the creation.³⁸ These will not be explored in depth here, but suffice it to say that each one of these admonitions has biblical support and should thus be incorporated into a believer's plan to engage society at large.

The fifth and final area of application that Litfin discusses in which the Christian should live a "gospel-worthy" life concerns the natural creation. This admonition is based on the inherent goodness of God's creation, God's call for man to steward his creation, and the fact that God through Christ will renew and redeem all of creation, and not just the human race. Christians, therefore, have a responsibility to care for God's creation. There are thus at least five biblically based ways in which a Christian can demonstrate the gospel of Jesus Christ non-verbally.

ii. Holism Versus Prioritism

The reader should recall that these next four categories are ways of explaining the various views concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry. These categories are not alternatives to word or deed ministry but are ways of describing how word and deed ministry relate to one another.

1. Holism The first category to be discussed is holism.³⁹ Holism has been defined in several ways by various scholars, but the category began to crystallize when John Stott, seeking to mediate between the liberal tendency to think of missions as merely the establishment of shalom (or social harmony) and the conservative tendency to think of missions as only

³⁸Ibid., 101.

³⁹Holistic missions are sometimes referred to as "integral missions." Christopher R. Little, "Breaking Bad Missiological Habits," in *Discovering the Mission of God*, 491. This dissertation, however, will use the term holistic, rather than integral.

evangelism (or gospel proclamation), put forward his definition of mission. “Mission,” he said, “describes...everything the church is sent into the world to do.”⁴⁰ This definition of mission became the basis for the broader understanding of missions that came to be known as “holistic missions,” and although “holistic missions” has been variously defined, it is usually used “in ways consonant with Stott’s understanding.”⁴¹

However, although the term is usually employed in order to unite ecumenicals and evangelicals, Carl Braaten says that it has become “a bone of contention, each side claiming to be ‘more holistic than thou.’”⁴² Some see holism as ministering through word, deed, and sign,⁴³ while others emphasize that holistic ministry results in the transformation of entire societies and cultures. According to Andreas Kostenberger, holism says that Christians should “not force an unnatural dichotomy between people’s spiritual and physical conditions.”⁴⁴ Samuel Escobar concurs, saying that the essence of holistic mission is that it consists in service to both “the spiritual in proclaiming the Word” and to the “physical in meeting human needs.”⁴⁵ David Hesselgrave also agrees with this formulation of holism, saying that holism can be defined as “the partnership of social (and, sometimes, political) action with evangelism.”⁴⁶ Christopher

⁴⁰John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (1975; repr., Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 48.

⁴¹David J. Hesselgrave, “Redefining Holism,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (July 1999): 280.

⁴²Carl E. Braaten, *The Apostolic Imperative: Nature and Aim of the Church’s Mission and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1985), 63.

⁴³Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, 75; John Steward, “Biblical Holism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 448.

⁴⁴Andreas J. Kostenberger, “Foreword,” in David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 13.

⁴⁵Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 154.

⁴⁶Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 120.

Little says that holists usually understand “evangelism and social action as equal partners,” and that, because holists believe that God is concerned about all dimensions of life (physical, economic, spiritual, etc.), they hold that “mission that is oriented toward just making disciples and planting the church is considered biblically indefensible.”⁴⁷

The holistic view of missions, or missions as the partnership of word and deed, has arguably become the most widely accepted understanding of missions. The *Mission Handbook* (1998-2000) identifies the “emerging mission paradigm at the end of the second millennium” as the paradigm that accepts “the centrality of holism – life, deed, word and sign.”⁴⁸ Charles Van Engen agrees, saying, “Increasingly, Evangelical missiologists have adopted the biblical notion of God’s mission (*missio Dei*) as pointing toward a more holistic view of mission.”⁴⁹ Rene Padilla also agrees, saying, “Mission is faithful to scripture only to the extent to which it is holistic.”⁵⁰

This section has illustrated that, because of Stott’s widespread influence, the holistic view of missions has been embraced by a wide variety of evangelical scholars. This makes it difficult to define holism too strictly and allows for the formulation of some distinctions regarding the term. Hesselgrave has provided two such distinctions.

a. Revisionist Holism Hesselgrave says that there are two kinds of holism. The first is

⁴⁷Little, “Breaking Bad Missiological Habits,” 491; idem., “What Makes Mission Christian?,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 67.

⁴⁸Bryant L. Myers, “The New Context of World Mission,” in *Mission Handbook, 1998-2000, U. S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas*, ed. John A. Siewert and Edna G. Valdez (Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1997), 9.

⁴⁹Van Engen, “‘Mission’ Defined and Described,” 22.

⁵⁰C. Rene Padilla, “Holistic Mission,” in *A New Vision, A New Heart, A Renewed Call: Lausanne Occasional Papers from the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization Hosted by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand*, vol. 1, ed. David Claydon (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 220.

revisionist holism. This kind of holism makes evangelism and social action “full and equal partners.”⁵¹ The emphasis in this kind of holism is on the words “full” and “equal” in Hesselgrave’s definition. The main idea of revisionist holism is that evangelism and social action should not be prioritized, that one should not be subservient to the other. Both are ends in themselves because there should be no “dichotomy between material and spiritual, between evangelism and social action, between loving God and loving neighbor.”⁵² James Engel and William Dyrness’ formulation of the nature and goal of missions is a good example of revisionist holism. They say that “biblical holism” holds an “indivisible unity” between “evangelism and social transformation,” and that “evangelism and social transformation are inseparable elements in Christ’s kingdom.”⁵³

Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden would also be classified as revisionist holists. They say that because man’s vertical relationship with God cannot be separated from his horizontal relationship with his neighbor, there can be “no conceptual priority to addressing man’s vertical relationship,” and that there can be “no priority between the task of addressing personal and social change.”⁵⁴ Moreau labels those who hold this view “the radical discipleship group.” This group does not give priority to social justice or evangelism, seeing both as equal aspects of missions.⁵⁵

⁵¹Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 120.

⁵²Bryant Myers, “In Response...Another Look at ‘Holistic Mission,’” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (July 1999): 286-87.

⁵³James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 93.

⁵⁴Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, “Evangelism and Social Responsibility: A Biblical Study on Priorities,” in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, ed. Bruce Nicholls (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 211.

⁵⁵Moreau says that key figures in this group are Ron Sider, Rene Padilla, and Samuel Escobar. Moreau, “Mission and Missions,” 638. This writer, however, thinks that Sider best fits in the restrained holism category.

b. Restrained Holism The second kind of holism Hesselgrave discusses is restrained holism. This kind of holism “attempts to preserve the traditional priority for evangelism, while elevating social action.”⁵⁶ In this view, “evangelism and social action are made to be *more or less equal partners*, although a certain priority is reserved for evangelism.”⁵⁷ The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 articulates this kind of holism, as does Stott’s work *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, published a year later in 1975. The framers of the Covenant (chief of which was John Stott) made sure to include clear statements regarding the Christian’s social responsibility: “We should share [God’s] concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression.”⁵⁸ But the framers also preserved a clear priority for evangelism: “In the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.”⁵⁹ Several contemporary scholars and pastors fall into this category. Notable among them are

Other examples of revisionist holism can be found in Michael J. Quicke’s, “Promoting a Subversive Spirituality: New Wineskins and New Wine in Mission and Evangelism,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 172; and Valdir Steuernagel, “The Theology of Mission In Its Relation to Social Responsibility Within the Lausanne Movement” (PhD diss., The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1988), 255-59, accessed November 12, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/pqdtft/docview/303753559/18980B56F2D344B7PQ/1?accountid=12085#>.

⁵⁶Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 121.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, italics his.

⁵⁸“The Lausanne Covenant,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, 4.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 5.

Ronald Sider,⁶⁰ Carl Braaten,⁶¹ Matt Carter and Darrin Patrick,⁶² and Timothy Keller.⁶³ Some seem to suggest that Spurgeon falls in this category.⁶⁴ If he must be labeled a holist, he certainly would have been a restrained holist. This dissertation will argue, however, that Spurgeon is best classified as a prioritist. Prioritism will now be discussed.

2. Prioritism Prioritism upholds the primacy of the church's evangelistic mandate, asserting that the priority of the church's mission is the proclamation of the gospel and the making of disciples. The prioritist does not exclude various types of social ministry as illegitimate, but he does argue that gospel proclamation, not social action, is the priority of the church's mission. Christopher Little, an ardent defender of prioritism, says, "While prioritists would place varying emphases on the role of social work in mission, all would grant that word should take precedent over deed, or proclamation over social action, while pursuing mission to

⁶⁰"Evangelism has a logical priority for Christian social action...But if we truly follow Jesus, then Christian congregations and denominations will enthusiastically devote large amounts of resources to both evangelism and social action." *Good News and Good Works*, 170-71.

⁶¹"These concerns [i.e., humanization and development] belong within the inclusive horizon of the church's mission. But there is an aspect of the church's mission which is unique to the church. This is evangelism...The evangelical thrust in the church's mission must be given a certain primacy and priority...because God has given to the church a mandate which he has given to no other people in the world." *The Apostolic Imperative*, 75-76.

⁶²They argue that the church should proclaim "the truths of Scripture with passion, clarity, and boldness" and "commit itself to seeking the shalom, the flourishing, of the city." *For the City: Proclaiming and Living Out the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 26.

⁶³In one work, he says, "Loving deeds...cannot be separated from preaching the gospel." *Center Church*, 31. And in another work, he says, "It is best to speak of the 'mission of the church,' strictly conceived, as being the proclamation of the Word." *Generous Justice*, 216, n. 128. Other examples of restrained holism can be found in the following articles: David Allen Bledsoe, "This or That? The Tension Between Two Mandates in Christian Mission," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* (Spring 2012): 1-8; J. Jeffrey Palmer, "Meeting Human Needs and Proclaiming the Gospel: A Growing and Often Polarizing Trend in Missions Today," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* (Spring 2012): 9-21; Pat Melocon, "Word and Deed as Effective Mission Strategy," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* (Spring 2012): 22-33.

⁶⁴Patrick and Carter say that Spurgeon and the Metropolitan Tabernacle is their model for healthy ministry in an urban context. Though they do not use the term "restrained holism," they do say that Spurgeon's ministry was "radical" because he preached the gospel and sought to "meet the needs of the city, especially the poor." *For the City*, 20-23. This dissertation will argue, however, that, although Spurgeon did care deeply about the poor, he did not see evangelism and social action as "more or less equal partners."

the world.”⁶⁵

Prioritists, according to Hesselgrave, seek to maintain a distinction between the primary mission of the church and secondary and supporting ministries. This distinction between primary and secondary ministries is not to denigrate one below the other, as prioritists recognize “the importance of all or most of those ministries that address the various medical, educational, economic, and social needs of individuals and societies.”⁶⁶ Peter Wagner agrees that secondary ministries should not be neglected, saying, “When I argue that the evangelistic mandate has priority over the cultural mandate, this does not mean that I have any intention of neglecting the cultural mandate.”⁶⁷ Prioritism does not, therefore, imply that social ministries are beyond the work of the church.

However, because prioritists believe that social transformation is secondary and that spiritual transformation is primary, they give priority to evangelism and not to social ministries. They believe the gospel primarily concerns the salvation of sinners, not liberation from economic oppression or the alleviation of temporal suffering. Hesselgrave says, “The primary concern of our Lord and the heart of biblical missions have to do with meeting spiritual needs, not with meeting physical, material, or social needs.”⁶⁸ Prioritists argue that spiritual needs are more

⁶⁵“Breaking Bad Missiological Habits,” 491; cf. Christopher R. Little, “In Response to ‘The Future of Evangelicals in Mission,’” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 203-22; idem., *Polemic Missiology For the 21st Century: In Memoriam of Roland Allen* (2013), chap. 1; idem., “What Makes Mission Christian?,” 65-73.

⁶⁶Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 121. He says in another work, “Far from the caricature often drawn, conservative Evangelicals have usually responded to Christ’s command to love their neighbors of the world, not only to his commission to disciple them.” For example, “When news of a famine in Ethiopia or Burkino Faso reaches Evangelical ears, there will be an immediate and positive response.” *Today’s Choices for Tomorrow’s Mission: An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988), 77.

⁶⁷C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1981), 87.

⁶⁸Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 13.

important than physical needs because “eternal needs outweigh temporal ones,” which is why “the priority in Christian mission must be proclamation.”⁶⁹

What follows are six examples of missiologists from the last three decades who have articulated their version of prioritism. First, Robertson McQuilkin, President Emeritus at Columbia International University, says, “We can express our love for God in many ways. But the proof of love, said Jesus, is that we obey his commandments. And the commandment he returned to over and over following his resurrection? Go and proclaim the good news of redemption (Mark 16:15), go and preach repentance and remission of sin (Luke 24:47), go and disciple the nations (Matthew 28:19) to the uttermost parts (Acts 1:8).”⁷⁰ In other words, love for Jesus is most clearly demonstrated when Christians proclaim the good news of who Jesus is and what he has done. This proclamation should be the priority in Christian mission, as Christians and churches are “moved...by love for those who are perishing.”⁷¹

Second, Ajith Fernando, a Youth for Christ leader in Sri Lanka, is “reluctant to use the language of priority,” preferring to say that Christians are called to obey God totally, but he does say that evangelicals talk too much about living out kingdom values and fighting for justice for the poor, and not enough about proclaiming the gospel to those who do not know Christ. He says, “Most of the...people in the world who do not know Christ will not come and ask us,” which is why we “need to take the initiative and go to them.”⁷² He calls for a “fresh commitment to proactive evangelism,”⁷³ and “if talk of priority will help the church to a fresh commitment,

⁶⁹Little, “Breaking Bad Missiological Habits,” 495.

⁷⁰Robertson McQuilkin, “Lost Missions: Whatever Happened to the Idea of Rescuing People from Hell?,” *Christianity Today* 50, no. 7 (July 2006): 42.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ajith Fernando, “Getting Back on Course,” *Christianity Today* 51, no. 11 (November 2007): 42.

then so be it.”⁷⁴

Third, Stan Guthrie, editor at large for *Christianity Today*, argues that, since a missionary is a “sent one,” and since he is sent to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), the priority in Christian missions is disciple making. He says, “At rock bottom, a missionary makes disciples, in addition to all the other good works he or she may be called to do.”⁷⁵ He argues in another article that evangelism should take priority over social ministry. “No one will dispute that God calls us to love our neighbor in practical ways,” he says, “but what could be more loving than sharing news that can change a person’s life, both now and for eternity?” He continues, saying that if a choice between evangelism and social ministry must be made, “Jesus certainly put evangelism ahead of social ministry.”⁷⁶

Fourth, Samuel Moffett, Professor Emeritus of Ecumenics and Mission at Princeton Theological Seminary, says that evangelism and social ministry are partners in mission, but that, like all partnerships, “there must be a leading partner, a first among equals, or nothing gets done.” In the mission of the church, “the leading partner is evangelism,” and “the supreme task of the church...is evangelism.”⁷⁷

Fifth, in his provocative essay “Missiology Faces the Lion,” Donald McGavran argues that the lion that missiology faces is the “conviction that mission is primarily helpful activities to

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 45.

⁷⁵Stan Guthrie, “Missionary Myths: Why the Great Commission Still Applies,” *Christianity Today* 52, no. 9 (September 2008): 86.

⁷⁶Stan Guthrie, “Reimagining Missions: Two Scholars Seek to Rescue the Great Commission from Narrowly Evangelistic Readings, But Their Answers May Be Dangerously Wide,” *Christianity Today* 45, no. 6 (April 2001): 110.

⁷⁷Samuel Hugh Moffett, “Evangelism: The Leading Partner,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 576.

other people,” or “primarily helping those great groupings of humankind who are less fortunate than we are.”⁷⁸ McGavran says that missiologists need to “state clearly” that physical or social ministries do not “outrank or equal spiritual rebirth.”⁷⁹ He concludes, “As long as missiology confuses helpful activity with the discipling of *ethnos* after *ethnos*, missiology will limp where it should run.”⁸⁰ Thus, McGavran seems to think that until missiologists become prioritists, not only will the discipline of missiology suffer, but the primary task of the church – the discipling of all nations (or *ethnes*), will be left incomplete.

And sixth, Alex Luc, a professor at Columbia International University Seminary and School of Ministry in Columbia, South Carolina, acknowledges that “both social and evangelistic concerns have an important place in the kingdom of God...and prioritizing one over the other is difficult and at times may even seem overly simplistic.” However, he continues, “If priority is determined by what human beings ultimately need, the evangelistic concern deserves greater attention.”⁸¹

Though prioritism still has many proponents, it is not the most widely accepted approach to missions. Around the time of the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne in 1974, holism started to eclipse prioritism as the predominate approach to the relationship between word and deed ministry. The shift was most evident between Lausanne 1974 and Manila 1989. Douglas McConnell notes, “Both documents [Lausanne 1974 and Manila 1989] focus on evangelism, yet the latter emphasizes the issue of the whole gospel, demonstrating the

⁷⁸Donald A. McGavran, “Missiology Faces the Lion,” *Missiology: An International Review* 17, no. 3 (July 1989): 339.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., 340, italics his.

⁸¹Alex Luc, “The Kingdom of God and His Mission,” in *Discovering the Mission of God*, 93.

wide acceptance of social concern as an integral part of the Good News of Christ.”⁸² And, as mentioned above, Stott’s work *Christian Mission in the Modern World* was tremendously influential in swaying evangelicals away from prioritism to a more holistic view of missions. After Lausanne 1974 and because of Stott’s influence, other ways of delineating the relationship between word and deed ministry began to appear, one of which was incarnationalism, which will be discussed next.

iii. Incarnationalism Versus Representationalism

Recall again that the categories of incarnationalism and representationalism are not alternatives to word and deed ministry but are rather ways of explaining the relationship between word and deed ministry.

1. Incarnationalism Incarnational missions is an approach to missions that is based on the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ. Put simply, incarnationalism uses the incarnation of Jesus as a model for Christian mission. As one mission’s textbook says, “Just as Christ was incarnated as a person, so missionaries...need to incarnate themselves into a new context.”⁸³ Alan Hirsch, a leading advocate of incarnationalism, provides the following description and explanation of this approach to missions:

The Incarnation not only qualifies God’s acts in the world, but must also qualify ours. If God’s central way of reaching the world was to incarnate himself in Jesus, then our way of reaching the world should likewise be *incarnational*. To act incarnationally therefore will mean in part that in our mission to those outside of the faith we will need to exercise a genuine identification and affinity with those we are attempting to reach. At the very least, it will probably mean moving into common geography/space and so set up a real and abiding presence among the group.⁸⁴

⁸²Douglas McConnell, “Holistic Mission,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 449.

⁸³Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 12.

⁸⁴Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 133.

Hirsch goes on to say that incarnational ministry is not merely a ministry of presence at the expense of gospel proclamation. “A genuine incarnational approach,” he says, “will require that we be always willing to share the gospel story with those within our world,” and that “we simply cannot take this aspect out of the equation of mission,” as “we must ensure the faithful transmission of the message we carry through proclamation.”⁸⁵ Thus, incarnational ministry, according to Hirsch, is a ministry of both presence and proclamation, and the essence of incarnationalism is “taking the church to the people, rather than bringing people to the church.”⁸⁶

Incarnationalism as an approach to missions is primarily based on two texts from the Gospel of John. Jesus says in John 17:18, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world,” and John 20:21, “Jesus said to them again... ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’” Based on these verses, incarnationalists say that the church should “fashion its mission after the model provided by Jesus during his earthly ministry.”⁸⁷ Incarnationalists believe that the church does not merely represent Jesus, but actually “*is* Jesus working through his church today.”⁸⁸ The implications of this model are many, but primary among them is “a focus on the continuity between Jesus’ mission and the church’s mission.”⁸⁹

As with holism, John Stott was a major impetus behind the growth of the incarnational approach to missions.⁹⁰ Much of this impetus came from his 1975 book *Christian Mission in the*

⁸⁵Ibid., 134.

⁸⁶Ibid., 135.

⁸⁷Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and His Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 3.

⁸⁸Ibid., italics his.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Stott is one of many scholars and pastors over the last few decades that have advocated the incarnational approach. Others include Valdir R. Steuernagel and Matt Carter. Steuernagel says, “In every place mission must

Modern World, where he says that he changed his position regarding his view of the relationship between word and deed in missions. At the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966, he argued for the priority of preaching and making disciples, but by Lausanne in 1974, he had reformulated his view in order to place a greater emphasis on social action.

In *Christian Mission*, he says that inherent in the Great Commission is Jesus' command to obey all that he taught, and social responsibility is one of the things that he taught. He goes on to argue that the "crucial form" of the Great Commission is the Johannine version. He says that in John 17:18 and 20:21, Jesus "deliberately and precisely...made his mission the *model* of ours."⁹¹ This leads him to the conclusion that "our understanding of the church's mission must be deduced from our understanding of the Son's."⁹² He admits that Jesus' incarnation is unique, as he came to be the Savior of the world, to atone for sins, and to offer eternal life, and that the church "cannot copy him in these things,"⁹³ concluding that the church must model their mission after a more general characteristic of Jesus' mission, namely, service. "Our mission," he says, "like his, is to be one of service."⁹⁴ The "Jesus as a model servant" motif is what enables the church to "find the right synthesis of evangelism and social action," as both are "authentic expressions" of Jesus' loving service to humanity.⁹⁵

assume the language of incarnation." "Social Concern and Evangelization: The Journey of the Lausanne Movement," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 15, no. 2 (April 1991): 53. Likewise, Matt Carter says, "At the end of the day...[our church's vision of mission] is not just about 'volunteering' to serve our city and help people – it's about incarnation." *For the City*, 132.

⁹¹Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 38, italics his.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., 39.

⁹⁵Ibid. Hesselgrave says that after Stott accepted John 20:21 as the primary statement of the Great Commission, thus making Jesus' mission a model for the church's, "it was a small step for Stott to go back to the fact that Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the downtrodden, and raised the dead," which led him to

There are several weaknesses in the incarnational approach,⁹⁶ but its influence on Christian mission and mission's strategy continues to be widespread.⁹⁷ Hesselgrave has argued that distinctions need to be made when discussing incarnationalism. He says that there are three categories of incarnationalists: liberation-incarnationalists, holism incarnationalists, and conversion incarnationalists. Liberation incarnationalists believe that the church has the obligation to be agents of socio-political change, combating all forms of oppression in order to achieve total liberation.⁹⁸ Holism-incarnationalists aim to mediate between the view that sees proclamation as priority and the view that sees establishing shalom as priority, concluding that sociopolitical action is an equal partner with evangelism. John Stott is a chief proponent of this view of incarnationalism.⁹⁹ Conversion-incarnationalists understand the mission of the church as making disciples among the nations, but attempt to "fashion contemporary missiology after the pattern and principles of Jesus more than those of the apostle Paul."¹⁰⁰ This dissertation will argue that Spurgeon was a representationalist rather than an incarnationalist, but if he were to be labeled an incarnationalist, he would have been a conversion incarnationalist.

Representationalism will now be discussed.

conclude that "evangelization and sociopolitical action are partners in mission with the former having a certain priority." *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Missions*, 79.

⁹⁶See the interchange between David Hesselgrave and John Stott: David J. Hesselgrave, "Holes in 'Holistic Mission,'" *Trinity World Forum* 15, no. 3 (1990): 1-5; John Stott, "An Open Letter to David Hesselgrave," *Trinity World Forum* 16, no. 3 (1991): 1-2; David Hesselgrave, "To John Stott – A Surrejoinder," *Trinity World Forum* 16, no. 3 (1991): 3-4; and Harriet Hill, "Incarnational Ministry: A Critical Examination," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 26 (1990): 196-201.

⁹⁷E.g., Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, ch. 5.

⁹⁸Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 146.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 146-47.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 147.

2. Representationalism Representationalism is related to incarnationalism in much the same way that holism is related to prioritism. The two approaches to mission are not opposites of each other but differ only in matters of emphases. Incarnationalism emphasizes continuity between the mission of Jesus and the mission of his disciples, whereas representationalism emphasizes discontinuity between the mission of Jesus and the mission of his disciples. One example of this is that, while Jesus gives life in a “primary sense,” his disciples bear witness to the life that Jesus offers.¹⁰¹ Another example is that Jesus’ incarnation is presented in the Gospel of John as “thoroughly unique, unprecedented, and unrepeatable,” as it is “linked with Jesus’ eternal preexistence (cf. 1:1, 14) and his unique relationship with God the Father (cf. 1:14, 18).”¹⁰² The disciples of Jesus cannot “model” (to use Stott’s word) these aspects of Jesus’ identity and mission. This leads Kostenberger to conclude that Stott’s view “appears to jeopardize Jesus’ salvation-historical uniqueness.”¹⁰³ According to Kostenberger, the “nature of Jesus’ relationship with his sender, is presented in the Fourth Gospel as the model for the disciples’ mission.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, it is Jesus’ relationship with his Father (i.e. one of obedience and utter dependence) that the church should model in mission, not his unique, salvific work. There is thus significant discontinuity between Jesus’ mission and the church’s mission.

Representationalists view “the primary task of [Jesus’] disciples as witnessing to

¹⁰¹Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 4.

¹⁰²Ibid., 216; cf. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert agree, “It is unwise to assume that because we are sent as Jesus was sent, we have the exact same mission he had. We must protect the absolute uniqueness of what Jesus came to do.” *What is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 57.

¹⁰³Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 216.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 217.

Jesus.”¹⁰⁵ The representationalist believes that the church’s mission is primarily centered on the disciple-making mandate given by Jesus. Kostenberger says, “If the church is to engage in mission as prompted by God’s initiative in Christ, then the church’s mission is to be conceived as essentially responsive and representational in nature.”¹⁰⁶ Representationalists will therefore generally look to Paul, rather than Jesus, as their model for missions. Hesselgrave summarizes this point well: “There would be no gospel, no church, and no mission apart from Christ, but it was Paul, acting as Christ’s *ambassador* (from Greek *presbeuo*, ‘to act as a representative’), who explained the gospel, extended the church, and exemplified the mission.”¹⁰⁷

To clarify the representationalist position, notice how a representationalist would respond to the three following missiological questions. In response to the question, “What are missionaries to be in the world?”, the representationalist will say that missionaries are to be “representatives of an authoritative Sender, sent to certain places and peoples to fulfill a prescribed role.”¹⁰⁸ In response to the question, “What are missionaries to say?”, the representationalist will say that their essential message is the gospel of Christ – “the good news of what God has accomplished in sending his only begotten Son into the world to die and rise again in order that the world might be saved.”¹⁰⁹ And in response to the question, “What are missionaries to do?”, the representationalist will say that their fundamental task is to proclaim

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁶Andreas J. Kostenberger, “Twelve Theses on the Church’s Mission in the Twenty-first Century: In Interaction with Charles Van Engen, Keith Eitel, and Enoch Wan,” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 64.

¹⁰⁷Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 155, italics his.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 152.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 153.

the gospel and organize converts into self-governing churches.¹¹⁰ The answers to these three fundamental questions reveal the inherent commitment that representationalists have to word ministry. Representationalists do not deny that certain social ministries are good and important, but with the prioritist, they endeavor to keep the biblical mandate of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples as the focus and priority of the church's mission.

d. Outline of Project

As noted above, this dissertation will argue that Spurgeon's approach to missions was word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational. In other words, Spurgeon's various ministries were primarily oriented towards proclaiming the gospel and making disciples, and secondarily oriented towards addressing social concerns.

Chapters two and three of this dissertation will highlight Spurgeon's two largest ministries, the Pastor's College and the Stockwell Orphanage, in order to illustrate the priority of gospel proclamation in Spurgeon's approach to missions. The Pastor's College was the ministry that Spurgeon deemed most important, and it was a deed ministry in many ways, as Spurgeon was committed to meeting the physical needs of his students. However, the primary purpose of the College was to train men to proclaim the gospel. The College, therefore, was primarily a word, not deed, ministry.

The Stockwell Orphanage was a ministry that met the immediate physical needs of orphans in London. However, though the Orphanage appears to be a deed-based ministry, it was

¹¹⁰Ibid., 154; DeYoung and Gilbert offer a good summary of the representationalist view of the church's mission: "The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father." *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 62.

in reality a deed and word ministry, with word taking the priority. The physical needs of the children were met with a view towards their spiritual needs being met through the gospel.

This dissertation will then look at several of Spurgeon's other ministries, illustrating their word-based orientation. It will be argued that Spurgeon's church planting initiatives, international mission efforts, Colportage Society, evangelistic societies, and other miscellaneous ministries all prioritized word ministry over deed ministry.

This dissertation will then examine several of Spurgeon's sermons to his congregation and several sermons delivered at outside speaking engagements in order to illustrate his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation in missions. Following this analysis, other aspects of Spurgeon's missiology will be discussed, specifically his commitment to deed ministry, his work to care for the Christian poor, and his work to care for the poor in general. Six factors responsible for his social ministry will be considered, as well as two critiques of his social ministry and his response to each.

This dissertation will close by offering seven suggestions based on Spurgeon's ministry that will help contemporary missiologists, mission practitioners, pastors, and other church leaders refocus their efforts on the primary mission of the church, namely gospel proclamation. This chapter will apply the results of the research of this project to the current missiological setting and argue that the overemphasis on holistic missions and social action currently in vogue among contemporary missiologists needs the corrective that Spurgeon's prioritistic approach can provide.

e. Literature Review

The number of relevant works, whether books or articles, related to Spurgeon's missiology is scarce, a fact that necessitates that this dissertation ought to be written. To this

writer's knowledge there is not a singular work devoted specifically to Spurgeon's missiology or his view concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry. There are numerous biographies on Spurgeon and dozens of articles on Spurgeon's ministry, but they usually mention his mission efforts (both social and evangelistic) without offering any analysis of the missiological impulse behind them. The need for such an analysis is one of the reasons this dissertation has been written.

Among biographies, the one exception would be Lewis Drummond's work *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*. This nine-hundred-page tome covers almost every area of Spurgeon's life and ministry. Chapter eight is devoted to "Spurgeon's Social, Educational, and Outreach Ministries," and provides limited analysis on Spurgeon's approach to missions. Drummond's conclusion seems to be that Spurgeon took a holistic, rather than prioritistic, approach to missions. He says that one of the "tragedies" in the church has been the "separation of social ministries and spiritual, evangelistic ministries," and that the New Testament and the church through the centuries have "always combined in a harmonious unity these two merging ministries."¹¹¹ Spurgeon's ministries, Drummond says, "epitomized the perfect blending of evangelistic fervency and deep social concern," and his ministry "will always stand as a symbol of a minister who developed his life of service in the beautiful balance of social ministries and evangelistic commitment."¹¹² Drummond never uses the language of holism or prioritism, but he seems to be arguing that Spurgeon believed that social ministries and evangelistic ministries are equal partners in the church's mission. Thus, Drummond probably would have labeled Spurgeon a holist, a conclusion with which this dissertation will disagree.

¹¹¹Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 397.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 398. Cf. *ibid.*, 441.

Arnold Dallimore's work *Spurgeon: A New Biography* is much shorter and less detailed in its analysis of Spurgeon's life and ministry. The chapter on the "Almshouses and Orphanages" provides a good overview of the work accomplished by these ministries, but there is no analysis of the missiological impulse behind them. This is illustrated by Dallimore's summarizing statement concerning Spurgeon's work to establish the Orphanage. He says, "The orphanage was a lasting demonstration of the fact that Spurgeon's faith was not mere theory but that it produced good works."¹¹³ This may be true, but it does not help explain the motivating missiological factors that led Spurgeon to initiate and carry out this work.

The biography that most closely aligns with the thesis of this dissertation is the most recent one: Tom Nettles' *Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. In this work, there is a chapter on the "Theological Foundations for a Benevolent Ministry" in which Nettles discusses the theology that undergirded Spurgeon's many benevolent works. Nettles says at several places that word ministry was the priority in Spurgeon's various ministries. For example, he says, "All of [Spurgeon's] benevolences...subservied the ultimate goal of dispensing the gospel under the confidence that the perishing would be saved,"¹¹⁴ and that conversions were the "primary intention of the institutions."¹¹⁵ But then, concerning the Boys' Orphanage, he says, "Spurgeon, in typical holistic fashion, looked to physical well-being, emotional stability, and joyful relationships as well as the preeminent concern of salvation."¹¹⁶ Although he uses the language of "preeminence"

¹¹³Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (1985; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 129.

¹¹⁴Tom Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 343.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 375.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 378.

concerning the boys' spiritual condition, he characterizes Spurgeon's approach at the Orphanage as holistic in nature. Nettles' work thus creates confusion regarding Spurgeon's understanding of the relationship between word and deed ministry.

The number of journal articles written on Spurgeon's social ministries is quite small (approximately ten) given the large scope of Spurgeon's benevolent ministries. There are several articles written on the missional thrust of the Pastor's College and his church planting efforts, but to the knowledge of this writer, no articles have been written specifically addressing Spurgeon's missiology or his view concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry.

Several articles written on various aspects of Spurgeon's ministry make passing comments regarding his approach to missions, but none of them offer any sustained treatment concerning his view concerning the nature of the church's mission. When they do address Spurgeon's missiology, they almost always classify him as a holist, rather than a prioritist. For example, Ian Randall, in his article "'A Mode of Training': A Baptist Seminary's Missional Vision," says that "a holistic emphasis...had been prominent in Spurgeon's own ministry."¹¹⁷ William Travis, in his article "Urban Pilgrims and Pioneers: Charles H. Spurgeon and the Poor," is right when he says that Spurgeon "did not have a fully articulated social philosophy," but his statement that Spurgeon "saw care for the soul and care for the body as two indissoluble parts of religious expression"¹¹⁸ does not align with Spurgeon's clear statements regarding the prioritistic nature of the mission of the church.¹¹⁹ And Peter Morden, in his article "The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon: The Outworking of Communion, Active Exertion," says that the Orphanage is best

¹¹⁷Ian M. Randall, "'A Mode of Training': A Baptist Seminary's Missional Vision," *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (January 2007): 6.

¹¹⁸William G. Travis, "Urban Pilgrims and Pioneers: Charles H. Spurgeon and the Poor," *Urban Mission* 10 (September 1992): 35.

¹¹⁹Dozens of these statements will be provided in the chapters that follow.

described as “an example of integral mission.”¹²⁰ These three articles offer no sustained analysis of Spurgeon’s missiology, and when they do comment on it, they wrongfully conclude that Spurgeon was a holist. Had a more thorough analysis been undertaken, they probably would have avoided the language of holism.

Similarly, David Kingdon, in his chapter on Spurgeon’s social concern in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today*, quotes from one of Spurgeon’s sermons where Spurgeon says that God cares about people’s bodies as well as their souls. He then says that this sermon is indicative of the “holistic emphasis” of Spurgeon’s ministry.¹²¹ But just because Spurgeon said that God cares about people’s bodies as well as their souls does not make him a holist, especially in light of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary that this dissertation will put forward.

Michael Nicholls ends the opening chapter of his book on Spurgeon’s College by saying that Spurgeon “was committed to Kingdom life which held the balance between evangelism and social action in holistic mission.”¹²² This comment is odd given the fact that Nicholls does not mention one aspect of Spurgeon’s social ministry in the chapter, while highlighting throughout Spurgeon’s commitment to train proclaimers of the gospel. His presentation of Spurgeon’s College thus seems to betray his belief that Spurgeon was a holist.

This overview of the literature available on Spurgeon’s missiology has pointed out two glaring deficiencies. First, there simply has not been enough work done on Spurgeon’s approach

¹²⁰Peter Morden, “The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon: The Outworking of Communion, Active Exertion,” *Baptistic Theologies* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 68.

¹²¹David Kingdon, “Spurgeon and His Social Concern,” in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 99.

¹²²Mike Nicholls, *Lights to the World: A History of Spurgeon’s College 1856-1992* (Harpden, England: Nuprint, 1993), 50.

to missions. As a leading figure in Christian history, and because he oversaw a multitude of evangelistic and social ministries, his understanding of the nature of the church's mission is worthy of consideration. And second, the literature that is available almost unilaterally defines Spurgeon as a holist, rather than a prioritist. This dissertation hopes to correct both of these areas, as it offers a sustained treatment on Spurgeon's understanding of the nature of the church's mission, arguing that his approach to missions was thoroughly prioritistic, rather than holistic.

f. Methodology

The primary source material produced by Spurgeon will be used in order to establish the thesis of this dissertation. His four volume *Autobiography*, his monthly magazine *The Sword and the Trowel*, and his sermons as found in *The New Park Street Pulpit* and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* will be the principal sources for this study and will provide relevant insights concerning his views on word and deed ministry. Several important biographies and secondary sources on Spurgeon's life and ministry will also be utilized, with emphasis given to those written closer to the time of Spurgeon's life.

g. Limitations

This dissertation is not primarily an analysis of the various contemporary views concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry. This introduction has provided a working analysis of the various views concerning the relationship between word and deed ministry, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine each view exhaustively. For further study, the reader is encouraged to peruse the literature referred to in the footnotes of this chapter.

This dissertation is also not an exhaustive look at all aspects of Spurgeon's ministry but focuses only on how Spurgeon viewed the relationship between word and deed ministry. Various sources concerning his ministry will be cited throughout the dissertation that can aid the reader in a further study of Spurgeon's wide-ranging ministries.

h. Conclusion

The contemporary church is faced with many options regarding how to define her mission in the world, leading to a multitude of views concerning the nature of the church's mission. There is substantial disagreement concerning the nature of the church's mission among contemporary missiologists and practitioners. Therefore, the formulation of a clear and concise vision for the mission of the church is a worthy endeavor, and Spurgeon's ministry provides valuable insights, suggestions, and corrections that contemporary missiologists, mission practitioners, pastors, and other church leaders need in order to recapture a clear vision of the church's mission in the world. This look at Spurgeon's missiology will begin with a discussion on the priority of gospel proclamation at Spurgeon's College, the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Priority of Gospel Proclamation at the Pastor's College

Spurgeon's deep and abiding commitment to education is not widely known.¹ Before his conversion, Spurgeon was a tutor (i.e., teacher) in the college town of Cambridge, teaching young boys basic subjects. After his conversion and while pastoring in the small town of Waterbeach, Spurgeon intended to open his own school in nearby Cambridge. He put out the following advertisement in a Cambridge newspaper in December 1853:

Mr. C. H. Spurgeon begs to inform his numerous friends that, after Christmas, he intends taking six or seven young gentlemen as day pupils. He will endeavour to the utmost to impart a good commercial Education. The ordinary routine will include Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, and Mensuration; Grammar and Composition; Ancient and Modern History; Geography, Natural History, Astronomy, Scripture, and Drawing. Latin and the elements of Greek and French, if required.²

Spurgeon was thus involved in formal education both before and immediately after his conversion, leading some to conclude that he was “a teacher turned pastor.”³

Education would become one of Spurgeon's most significant, even if unknown, legacies. It was theological education specifically that became one of his primary focuses in ministry. After he commenced his pastorate in London in 1854, theological education and the training of young men for gospel ministry consumed much of his time and energy. “This is my one life's work,” he said in 1863, “to which I believe God called me, and therefore I must do it... To preach the Gospel myself, and to train others to do it, is my life's object and aim.”⁴ Preaching and

¹Michael Nicholls agrees, noting that Spurgeon is not usually remembered as an educator. “Spurgeon's College,” *Christian History* 10, no. 1 (1991): 40.

²*C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 1 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 341.

³Michael Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 1: General Educational Concerns,” *Baptist Quarterly* 31, no. 8 (October 1986): 385.

education were thus the expressed priorities of Spurgeon's ministry.

Spurgeon believed that training men for gospel ministry was the best type of benevolence ministry. He considered the instruction and training of young ministers to be "superior to all other services done to the Lord and his church."⁵ His conviction was that "there is no better, holier, more useful or more necessary Christian service than assisting to educate young ministers."⁶ Speaking in third person, he said, "Even his love for the orphanage cannot make him place the college in the second rank. No amount of sympathy for the widow and the fatherless will ever make him forget the important work of training men to preach."⁷ G. Holden Pike, a close associate of Spurgeon's, said that the College was Spurgeon's "favourite institution,"⁸ his "favourite service,"⁹ and "the chief work of his life, next to preaching the gospel."¹⁰ David Gracey, principal of the College in 1892, gave the first report of the College after Spurgeon's death, stating that the Pastor's College was "the first of [Spurgeon's] philanthropic institutions" and "dearest to his heart."¹¹ The College was for Spurgeon "his first born and best beloved" ministry because he believed that the training of ministers was "the most excellent work."¹² As

⁴G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3 vols. (1894; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 3:61.

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Report of the Pastors' College: 1881-82," *The Sword and the Trowel* (June 1882): 260. This and all subsequent references to *The Sword and the Trowel* (hereafter *S&T*) come from an eight-volume reprinted edition of the magazine published by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, TX from 1975-2006.

⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastor's College," *S&T* (June 1875): 252.

⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (January 1882): 43.

⁸Pike, *Life and Work*, 2:232.

⁹*Ibid.*, 2:233.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 3:16.

¹¹*S&T* (June 1892): 277-78, quoted in Tom Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 368.

these quotations indicate, Spurgeon loved and prized theological education, prioritizing it over everything but his own preaching ministry. This is a significant fact in light of the vast number of ministries that Spurgeon oversaw. In his mind, the College was primary and all other ministries were secondary.

Spurgeon did not love education for education's sake, however. He believed that education was a means to the end of word ministry. After his conversion, Spurgeon's first educational endeavor was teaching Sunday School in the town of Newmarket. He quickly realized that this opportunity to teach children on Sunday was more than an opportunity to impart information to them; it was an opportunity to give them the gospel. He saw a link between education and evangelism, believing that the former was a means to the latter. Nicholls notes that Spurgeon's College was no different, as it was Spurgeon's aim to educate men for the purpose of evangelism. It was "through an appropriate educational environment and curriculum" at the College that Spurgeon sought to train "evangelistic church planters."¹³ Spurgeon thus carried his evangelistic educational philosophy from the Sabbath schools of Newmarket to his Pastor's College in London.

The basic contention of this chapter is that the primary purpose of the College was to train men for gospel proclamation, or word ministry. Though the College was a deed ministry in many ways, as Spurgeon addressed the physical needs of his students, this chapter will argue that the College was primarily a word, not deed, ministry. This chapter will begin by offering a brief sketch of the origin and initial history of the College. This will be followed by an overview of

¹²Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), 337, quoted in Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 417.

¹³Michael Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2: The Principles and Practice of the Pastors' College," *Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (April 1987): 91.

Spurgeon's role at the College, a look at how the College was financed, and a discussion of the purposes of the College. The bulk of the chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the many ways in which the priority of word ministry at the College was implemented. A brief section will then discuss Spurgeon's commitment to meeting the physical needs of the students in order to illustrate that Spurgeon did not prioritize word ministry at the College at the expense of deed ministry. This chapter will close by mentioning one critique of the College and Spurgeon's response to it. A brief sketch of the origin and initial history of the College will now be given.

a. Origin and Initial History of the College

In the early days of Spurgeon's ministry at New Park Street Chapel, several men who had been converted through his preaching began preaching the gospel on the streets of inner-city London.¹⁴ Spurgeon was convinced that these men had the capacity to be useful in gospel ministry because people were converted through their preaching. He noticed, however, that these men were uneducated and not likely to gain admission to any formal College, so he said that it entered his heart "to provide them with a course of elementary instruction" in order to teach them to speak accurately and to encourage them towards a lifetime of study.¹⁵

The first young man that Spurgeon decided to train for the ministry was T. W. Medhurst. Medhurst's journey to faith in Christ began when he heard Spurgeon preach in London at Maze Pond Chapel in the early part of 1854. After hearing him preach, Medhurst began to write Spurgeon letters concerning his salvation, as he was greatly distressed concerning the state of his soul. After hearing Spurgeon preach again, this time on a Thursday evening at New Park Street,

¹⁴Pike, *Life and Work*, 2:230.

¹⁵C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 2 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1898), 147.

Medhurst was converted. He wrote to Spurgeon telling him of his conversion and his desire to be baptized. Spurgeon rejoiced and agreed that Medhurst should be baptized at once. He was baptized in September of 1854 and received into the membership of New Park Street.

After his baptism, Medhurst began to preach in the open air and at any available venue.¹⁶ He did not, however, have any thought of entering full-time ministry until two people who became members of New Park Street through his street ministry suggested to Spurgeon that Medhurst should prepare himself for the ministry. Medhurst accepted the proposal and arrangements were made in July 1855 for him to live and study with the Rev. C. H. Hosken at the Mill Road Collegiate School in Bexley Heath, Kent.¹⁷ From the beginning, the purpose of Spurgeon's College was clear. The College would exist for the training of young men who evidenced a call to preach and who were already actively engaged in fruitful ministry.

Medhurst spent the majority of his time with Rev. Hosken at the school in Bexley Heath, but he also spent several hours a week studying theology with Spurgeon. During this time, Medhurst said that Spurgeon was already anticipating the addition of more students. In a letter to Medhurst in September 1855, Spurgeon wrote, "I have been thinking that, when you are gone out into the vineyard, I must find another to be my dearly-beloved Timothy, just as you are."¹⁸ Medhurst then tells how, when he refused to accept some money that Spurgeon tried to give him, Spurgeon commented that "he must take a second student." Because of this incident, according to Medhurst, "the Pastor's College was commenced."¹⁹

The second student was added to the College in 1857, and in the spring of that year, the

¹⁶Ibid., 2:145.

¹⁷Ibid., 2:141-45.

¹⁸Ibid., 2:146.

¹⁹Ibid., 2:147.

Rev. George Rogers of Camberwell was recruited to serve as the first official tutor of the College. Rogers, an aging congregational minister, would soon become the Principal of the College. Spurgeon believed that Rogers was “the most suitable” man to help him enact his vision for the College. Rogers had been “waiting and ripening for the office and work of a tutor,” so that “while the idea of educating young men was simmering in [Spurgeon’s] brain,” Rogers was searching for a place to spend the latter years of his ministry as a tutor.²⁰ Providence led the two together so that, by the spring of 1857, Spurgeon had enrolled his first two students and secured the man who would be the primary teacher and administrator of the College for the next twenty-five years.

Before long, other men came to Spurgeon seeking instruction and training for the ministry. One student in 1855 grew into two, then eight, then twenty, and then seventy by 1864.²¹ In the early days of the College, the students lodged in Rogers’ house. As the College grew, students were housed by several families from the Metropolitan Tabernacle.²² This was done by necessity and by design. Spurgeon never liked the idea of housing all the students under one roof. He thought that the dormitory approach produced levity among the students, while also disengaging them from the ebb and flow of family and church life.²³ This approach to housing became one of the hallmarks of the College, illustrated by the fact that there were no rooms built for student housing when the College moved to its own facility.

²⁰Ibid., 2:148.

²¹Pike, *Life and Work*, 3:77.

²²C. H. Spurgeon, “Concerning the College,” *S&T* (April 1870): 149; cf. Robert Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 140.

²³Spurgeon, “Concerning the College,” (1870): 149; cf. C. H. Spurgeon, “The Ministry Needed by the Churches, and Measures for Providing it,” *S&T* (1871): 227.

When the Metropolitan Tabernacle was opened in 1861, the College students migrated from Rogers' house to the classrooms at the new church. In 1874, the College relocated again, this time to its own facility, which was within walking distance from the Tabernacle. Spurgeon used this opportunity to bring the work of the College to the attention of his Tabernacle congregation. He reminded his people that the money given to the College was for the purpose of educating young men who were called to be "ministers of the cross of Christ," so that "they may go forth to preach the Word."²⁴ Even in the midst of transition the primary purpose of the College remained clear: to train men to proclaim the gospel.

b. Spurgeon's Role in the College

Spurgeon exercised several roles within the College. He, of course, was the founder and overall visionary for the Institution, but he was also involved in much of its operation, especially at the beginning. His primary contribution in this regard was that he conducted all of the admission interviews with prospective students. This interview was his way of discerning whether or not an applicant had truly been called to ministry. In general, he only considered applicants who had already been preaching for two years. Though he did not enjoy it, on several occasions he had to inform an applicant that he did not think that they were called or suited for the ministry. He said that he was "obliged" to tell a prospective student when he was "convinced that the Lord has not called him."²⁵ Spurgeon took the application process and interview very seriously because he had a deep sense of obligation to the churches that compelled him to "judge

²⁴*C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 3 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), 125-26.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 3:143.

with severe discrimination.”²⁶ He knew that the men he accepted into the College would become pastors in churches, so the spiritual qualifications of a man were always more important to Spurgeon than academic qualifications.²⁷

The day-to-day administration of the College was in the hands of George Rogers at first, but as the College grew, James Archer Spurgeon, Charles’ younger brother, took over most of the administrative duties.²⁸ Charles, however, through his brother, was still the primary leader of the College. The role that Spurgeon is most remembered for, however, both by his students and by succeeding generations who have enjoyed his *Lectures to My Students*, were his Friday afternoon lectures. One of Spurgeon’s students, W. D. McKinney, provides an excellent first-hand description of these Friday afternoon classes. His account is worth quoting at length:

Friday afternoon came at last. The old familiar clock pointed to three; the door opened on the stroke of the hour, the beloved President appeared, and walked up to the desk – Dr. Gill’s pulpit, while hands clapped, feet stamped, and voices cheered, till he had to hold back his hand, and say, “Now, gentlemen, do you not think that is enough? The floor is weak, the ceiling is not very high, and, I am sure, you need all the strength you have for your labours.”

In those days, the President was in his prime. His step was firm, his eyes bright, his hair dark and abundant, his voice full of sweetest music and sacred merriment. Before him were gathered a hundred men from all parts of the United Kingdom, and not a few from beyond the seas. They were brought together by the magic of his name, and the attraction of his personal influence. His fame had gone out into all lands. His sermons were published in almost all languages. Many sitting before him were his own sons in the faith. Among his students he was at his ease, as a father in the midst of his own family. The brethren loved him, and he loved them.

Soon, the floods of his pent-up wisdom poured forth; the flashes of his inimitable wit lit up every face, and his pathos brought tears to all eyes. It was an epoch in student-life to hear him deliver his *Lectures to my Students*. What weighty and wise discourse he gave us on the subject of preaching! How gently he corrected faults, and encouraged genuine diffidence! What withering sarcasm for all fops and pretenders! Then came those wonderful imitations of the dear brethren’s peculiar mannerisms – one with the hot

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Nicholls, “Spurgeon’s College,” 42.

²⁸Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2,” 73.

dumpling in his mouth, trying to speak; another, sweeping his hand up and down from nose to knee; a third, with his hands under his coat-tails, making the figure of a water-wagtail. Then the one with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, showing the “penguin” style of oratory. By this means, he held the mirror before us so that we could see our faults, yet all the while we were almost convulsed with laughter. He administered the medicine in effervescing draughts.

After this, came the wise counsel, so kind, so grave, so gracious, so fatherly; then the prayer that lifted us to the mercy-seat, where we caught glimpses of glory, and talked face to face with the Master Himself. Afterwards, the giving out of the appointments for the next Lord’s-day took place; the class was dismissed for tea, and then came the men who wanted advice. Some were in trouble, others in joy; and the President listened patiently to all their tales; anon he would laugh, and then he would weep. At last, he is through, “weary in the work, but not weary of it.” His cheery voice gradually dies away as he ascends the stairs to his “sanctum.” We did not grieve as we parted from him; for we knew that, God willing, on the next Friday afternoon, we should once more see his bright, genial face, and hear his wit and wisdom again.²⁹

It is important to note that all of Spurgeon’s Friday afternoon lectures were related to some aspect of preaching or gospel ministry. He lectured on the call to ministry, prayer, the voice and gestures in preaching, using illustrations and anecdotes in preaching, conversion as the aim of preaching, and the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. The topics chosen by Spurgeon for his lectures serve as evidence of the fact that, for Spurgeon, the essence of Christian ministry was word ministry. He did not neglect to address physical needs, as the next section will show, but, as his lectures indicate, word ministry was the top priority and focal point at Spurgeon’s College.

c. Spurgeon’s Financing of the College

At the outset of the College, Spurgeon did not know where the funds would come from to support the students who began flocking to him for instruction and training. He was, however, resolute in his willingness to accept them, saying, “we could not deny them.”³⁰ The first student, Medhurst, was supported out of Spurgeon’s own pocket. Spurgeon’s wife, Susannah, recalls the

²⁹*Autobiography*, 3:140-43.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 2:148.

sacrifices that the newlywed couple had to make to support Medhurst. “We...had to practise rigid economy in all things,” she said, “for my dear husband earnestly longed to help young men to preach the gospel.”³¹ The Spurgeon’s had faith that the Lord would supply the needs of every student, a faith that was tested many times over the years. “Faith trembled,” Spurgeon said, “when tried with the weight of the support of one man; but the Lord has strengthened her by exercise, so that she has rejoiced under the load when multiplied a hundred fold.”³²

The massive sales of his sermons allowed Spurgeon to give between £600-800 a year to the College. However, because of his denunciation of slavery in the United States, his sermon sales there declined dramatically, crippling his ability to personally finance the work of the College. As he was able, he continued to contribute substantial amounts to the work of the College, even proposing to sell his horse and carriage at one point. He was willing to spend all the money he had, believing that if his income dried up, it was God’s way of telling him to stop the work.³³ His income never dried up, however, and many loyal supporters began to give faithfully to the work of the College.

Eventually, Spurgeon’s advisors suggested that he make the College part of the Tabernacle’s work, rather than a personal ministry. This he did, leading to a periodic taking up of collections at the Tabernacle for the College. Spurgeon continued to give large sums to the College, but he always did so joyfully. As far as he was concerned, the College “was a work of self-denial,” which is why “he never grudged either the toil or the money it cost him.”³⁴

Spurgeon’s love for theological education and his commitment to the training of young men for

³¹Ibid., 2:183.

³²Ibid., 2:148.

³³Ibid., 3:125-26; cf. Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk*, 136.

³⁴Pike, *Life and Work*, 2:234.

gospel proclamation were validated by his generous financial support of the College. In other words, he put his money where his heart was.

d. Purposes of the College

As noted, the primary purpose of Spurgeon's College was to train men to preach the gospel. However, the College also served several other purposes that were secondary in nature. These secondary purposes were to follow historical precedent, to oppose prevailing trends, to provide theological education to poor ministers, and to teach Calvinistic doctrine. These secondary purposes will be briefly discussed, followed by an extended discussion of the College's primary purpose of training men to preach the gospel.

i. To Follow Historical Precedent

The following portion from one of Spurgeon's "Notes from Mentone"³⁵ reveals the historical precedent that Spurgeon used to argue for the necessity of a school designed specifically for the training of men for the ministry. "In all ages," he said, "it has seemed good unto the Lord to gather men around some favoured instructor, and enable them, under his guidance, to sharpen their swords for the battle of life...Schools of the prophets are a prime necessity if the power of religion is to be kept alive and propogated in the land."³⁶ Spurgeon thus believed that God had historically used schools for the training of preachers as a part of his redemptive program, and that his College would be but one more of these "schools of the prophets."

³⁵Mentone is a coastal town in the south of France where Spurgeon often visited when he needed to recover his health and strength.

³⁶*Autobiography*, 3:137.

ii. To Oppose Prevailing Trends

Spurgeon claims that the work of the College “did not begin with any scheme,” saying that it “grew out of necessity.”³⁷ However, although Spurgeon did not found the College with a grand scheme in mind, it does appear that the College was formed, indirectly perhaps, to oppose three prevailing trends in theological education among nineteenth-century evangelicals in Britain. These three trends were: the liberalizing of theology, the higher expectations that the growing middle class had for colleges, and the trend to focus ministerial education on scholarly, rather than spiritual, goals.³⁸ In opposition to these trends, Spurgeon’s College championed theological conservatism, the common person, and theological training for the sake of preaching rather than scholarship. He despised the “social pretensions” that attempted “to turn theology from a vocational into an academic subject,” and was prepared to “swim against the tide” of the trends in theological education.³⁹

iii. To Provide Theological Education for Poor Ministers

Many of the young men who were converted and called to preach through Spurgeon’s ministry were from Southwark.⁴⁰ In fact, 50 of the first 157 students were from Southwark. This area has been described as “dim, dirty and destitute”⁴¹ and as a “damp, low-lying, thickly

³⁷Ibid., 2:148.

³⁸David W. Bebbington, “Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education,” in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 217-19.

³⁹Ibid., 219-20. Bebbington points out that there was more of an academic ethos at the College by the 1880’s. This ethos was the result of several outside circumstances, such as the College’s move to its own building away from the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the Education Act of 1870, and the agricultural depression that made it hard for rural churches to afford a pastor. These circumstances led to a lengthening of the course at the College from two to three years, thus creating more academic rigor at the College. Ibid., 233-34.

⁴⁰Southwark is a district in the heart of London, just south of the River Thames. The Metropolitan Tabernacle is in Southwark.

peopled, struggling region.”⁴² The men converted to Christ and called to ministry from this area were generally poor and could not afford any type of theological education, a fact not lost on Spurgeon. Concerning this situation, he said, “No college at that time appeared to me to be suitable for the class of men that the providence and grace of God drew around me.”⁴³ The men who needed to be trained were, for the most part, very poor, meaning that even if the education were free, the students from this area would need a considerable amount of money to cover book expenses, buy clothes, and pay rent. This economic reality of most of the men seeking training at the College led Spurgeon to provide training, books, room and board, and even spending money to students in need. This is one of the most remarkable facets of the College, illustrating that Spurgeon’s commitment to word ministry never came at the expense of deed ministry. Because Spurgeon genuinely cared for his students, he attended to their physical needs, making sure that they had everything they needed in order to succeed at the College.⁴⁴

iv. To Teach Calvinistic Doctrine

Spurgeon cherished the Calvinistic doctrine he learned from his father and grandfather as a boy. Through the College, he sought to train a new generation of young men to love the doctrines of grace. He realized that his dogmatic teaching of Calvinistic theology at the College cut against the grain of the quickly modernizing culture in which he lived, admitting that his “views of the gospel” and his “mode of training preachers” were “somewhat peculiar.”⁴⁵ One

⁴¹C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It’s History and Work* (1876; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 53.

⁴²W. Robertson Nicoll, *Princes of the Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), 50.

⁴³Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk*, 134.

⁴⁴This aspect of the College will be further discussed later in this chapter.

⁴⁵Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk*, 134.

reason why he wanted to teach Calvinistic doctrine was to safeguard churches from “emerging theological novelties.”⁴⁶ He also taught his students Calvinism for apologetic reasons, training them to be on the front lines in the “fight against modernism.”⁴⁷ Calvinistic doctrine was thus cherished and taught at the College because Spurgeon believed it was the system that would best preserve the evangelical faith in a time of theological compromise.

v. To Train Preachers of the Gospel

Spurgeon’s College was not founded merely in order to follow historical precedent, or as a reaction to the prevailing trends of the day, or as a social ministry for poor ministers, or as an attempt to indoctrinate students with Calvinistic theology. The primary purpose of the College was to train men as preachers of the gospel. This purpose is clearly articulated by Spurgeon in the following passage from his *Autobiography*: “When the Pastor’s College was fairly moulded into shape, we had before us but one object, and that was, the glory of God, by the preaching of the gospel...Our Institution set itself...to instruct those whom God had evidently called to preach the gospel...We never dreamed of making men preachers, but we desired to help those whom God had already called to be such.”⁴⁸ In a letter written to the “Christian public” in 1861, Spurgeon said that the “main plan and purpose” of the College, its object, is “not scholarship, but preaching the gospel.” He was convinced that many churches needed “a class of ministers who will not aim at lofty scholarship, but at the winning of souls.”⁴⁹ Thus, the College was founded in order to train men to preach, and men were trained to preach in order that souls might be saved.

⁴⁶Nicholls, “Spurgeon’s College,” 41.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸*Autobiography*, 2:148.

⁴⁹Ibid., 3:129.

The evangelistic purpose of the College remained steady as the decades passed. In 1873, almost twenty years into the College's existence, Spurgeon described the College as a "Home Missionary Society for the spread of the gospel."⁵⁰ In 1883, at the end of his tenure as Principal, George Rogers said this about the purpose of the College: "Our one chief desire is to be distinguished for our zeal for the spiritual and eternal welfare of our fellow men."⁵¹ After nearly thirty years of training students, the College's *Annual Report* reaffirmed its purpose in 1884-85, stating that its purpose was to educate those called "to maintain and spread the gospel of the grace of God."⁵² In 1889, at the end of Spurgeon's life, his vision for the College had not changed. He continued to state its purpose clearly, saying, "Our men seek to preach efficiently...to evangelise the poor – this is the College ambition, this and nothing else."⁵³ And in 1891, he said, "The world is our parish, and our [College] brethren are not sitting down, waiting to be called to settled charges, and comfortable incomes...they are willing to go wherever there is an opening for preaching Christ, and gathering a church."⁵⁴ For the nearly forty years that Spurgeon was at the helm of the College, its primary purpose was clear and steady. That purpose was to train men to preach the gospel and make disciples.

Contemporary Spurgeon scholars agree that the primary purpose of the College was to train men to preach the gospel. Michael Nicholls, a tutor at Spurgeon's College in the late

⁵⁰C. H. Spurgeon, "The Pastors' College," *S&T* (April 1873): 147.

⁵¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Paper Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with The Pastors' College, Newington, London: 1882-83," *S&T* (May 1883): 281.

⁵²Ian M. Randall, "'A Mode of Training': A Baptist Seminary's Missional Vision," *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (January 2007): 3.

⁵³*S&T* (1889): 311, quoted in Mike Nicholls, *Lights to the World: A History of Spurgeon's College 1856-1992* (Harpندن, England: Nuprint, 1993), 30.

⁵⁴*Annual Paper Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with the Pastors' College*, 1890-91, 4, quoted in Randall, "A Mode of Training," 11.

twentieth century, says, “The primary objective of the college was to make preachers of the Gospel,” and “the all-controlling aim of the instruction given was the preparation of powerful preachers.”⁵⁵ Lewis Drummond says that “the ultimate object of the College” was “the conversion of people,” and that “reaching...people for Christ worldwide always stood at the heart and core of the Pastor’s College.”⁵⁶ Ian Randall, arguing that mission was integral to Spurgeon’s College, says that the “ethos of the College” was “a concern to equip people to ‘preach the gospel.’”⁵⁷ He concludes that the “high priority” of the College was to train “students to be effective in mission.”⁵⁸ Because priorities in mission are not as clear now as they were at the end of the nineteenth century, Randall makes sure to point out that the priority of the College in its early decades was “effective evangelism.”⁵⁹ He cites John W. Ewing, who trained at the College in the 1880s, as saying that he received from the College “an impulse towards soul-winning,” as he sought to use “every power [he] possess[ed] to bear upon the work of leading men and women to Christ.”⁶⁰

The primary purpose of the College was thus clear to John Ewing: to be trained to preach the gospel in order to become an effective soul winner. The training offered at the College was designed to equip men to proclaim the gospel and reach the lost, not to engage their cities through various social ministries. This primary purpose of the College is why it should be

⁵⁵Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 1,” 392.

⁵⁶Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, 411, 414.

⁵⁷Randall, “A Mode of Training,” 3.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*S&T* (June 1906): 286-87, in Randall, “A Mode of Training,” 11.

considered a word rather than deed-oriented ministry, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational.

e. Priority of Word Ministry at the College

As stated in the previous section, the primary purpose of the College was to train men for gospel proclamation, or word ministry. The aim of this section is to explain how this overall purpose affected various aspects of the College. In other words, how was the overall purpose of training men for word ministry fulfilled in each element of the College?

Spurgeon's vision for the College was simple, yet full of intentionality, as each aspect of the College was purposefully designed to train men to become effective in gospel proclamation. These various aspects are summarized in the following extended quote from an article Spurgeon wrote for the *S&T* in 1875 in which he outlined his overall vision for the Pastor's College:

They [i.e., the students] are not to be warped into philosophers, polished into debaters, carved into metaphysicians, fashioned into literati, or even sharpened into critics, they are to be "thoroughly furnished unto every good work." The Scriptures must be their chief class-book, theology their main science, the art of teaching their practical study, and the proclamation and exposition of the gospel their first business. With all knowledge they may intermeddle; but upon the knowledge of Christ crucified they must dwell. Books and parchments should be prized, but prayer and meditation should be supreme. The head should be stored, but the heart also should be fed with heavenly food. The tutors should be men of equal learning and grace, sound scholars, but much more sound divines, men of culture, but even more decidedly men of God.⁶¹

This quote will serve as an outline of the various aspects of the College that were for Spurgeon focused on the priority of word ministry. Each of these aspects will now be discussed.

i. Students

They [i.e., the students] are not to be warped into philosophers, polished into debaters, carved into metaphysicians, fashioned into literati, or even sharpened into critics, they are to be "thoroughly furnished unto every good work."⁶²

⁶¹Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastors' College," 252.

Spurgeon created the College for a specific kind of student, a fact made clear by the entrance requirements to the College. Acceptance into the College was based on three things: a man's call to preach, his being actively engaged in preaching for at least two years, and his commitment to orthodox Calvinistic doctrine. The admission requirements to the College make it clear that Spurgeon's primary interest was to train men for word ministry.

The first two entrance requirements were based on Spurgeon's belief that there were two requisites that made a man a preacher: a special call and special gifts. The first requirement for entrance into the College was a man being called by God to preach. Regarding this requirement, Spurgeon said, "No man was accepted for training unless he was...divinely called to that office."⁶³ This was a non-negotiable requisite for entrance to the College, one that Spurgeon enforced with great determination. "Our institution," Spurgeon said, "aims to keep out of the sacred office [i.e. the pastorate] those who are not called to it."⁶⁴ The College was sometimes accused of being "a parson manufactory," a charge that Spurgeon routinely dismissed.⁶⁵ He made it clear that he received no men into the College unless they evidenced a genuine call from God to preach. He said that it would be more accurate to call him "a parson killer," because when he was convinced that a man was not called to preach, he was "obliged to tell him so."⁶⁶

The second requisite used to determine a candidate's entrance into the College was his gifting. In the students' entrance interview, Spurgeon asked the applicant if they were already

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Nicholls, *Lights to the World*, 28.

⁶⁴*S&T* (1887): 206, quoted in Nicholls, *Lights to the World*, 28-29.

⁶⁵*Autobiography*, 3:143.

⁶⁶Ibid.; cf. Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2," 79.

engaged in fruitful ministry. He asked this question because he was looking to train men who had already been preaching for at least two years, and because he wanted to know if the applicants had any “seals” to their ministry before he would admit them into the College.⁶⁷ The reasoning behind this approach was stated well by Principal George Rogers when he said that the College did not want “men whom tutors could make scholars but men whom the Lord had ordained to be preachers.”⁶⁸ Spurgeon did not want just any man who had been preaching for two years; he wanted men whose ministry was bearing fruit. This is why one of his leading questions for all applicants was, “Have you won souls for Jesus?” If they responded in the affirmative, he would say, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”⁶⁹ Spurgeon was only looking for students who evidenced a genuine call from God into the ministry, students who had been preaching for at least two years, and students whose call had been affirmed by preaching gifts and conversions.

There was a third requirement for entrance into the College, one that, while important, was secondary to the above two requirements. This third requirement was that students must hold Calvinistic views in order to be accepted. Spurgeon states the reason why in his *Lectures to My Students*: “In order not to be harassed with endless controversies, we invite those only who hold those views of divine truth which are popularly known as Calvinistic.”⁷⁰ This requirement was not mere doctrinal rigidity, but was the result of Spurgeon’s firm belief that Calvinism best understood and explained the gospel of Jesus Christ. Spurgeon believed that Calvinism preserved

⁶⁷*Autobiography*, 2:148; cf. Pike, *Life and Work*, 2:232.

⁶⁸*Annual Paper Concerning the Lord’s Work in Connection with the Pastors’ College*, 1866, quoted in Nicholls, *Lights to the World*, 29.

⁶⁹*Autobiography*, 2:149.

⁷⁰Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1881), vi, quoted in Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth*, 363.

“the fundamental evangelical truth of redemption by the blood of Jesus.”⁷¹ Because Spurgeon believed that Calvinism was essential to the preservation and proclamation of the gospel, Calvinism quickly became the theological ethos of the College. It could thus be argued that Calvinism stimulated a love for, and commitment to, word ministry among the students at the College.

ii. Curriculum

The curriculum at the College was strategically designed to train and equip young men to be effective in word ministry. This curriculum had several components, each of which will now be discussed.

1. Scripture-based Spurgeon’s vision for the curriculum began with his desire that the Bible be the student’s “chief class-book.”⁷² He was clear and emphatic that the goal of the College was the teaching of the Scriptures.⁷³ After Spurgeon’s death, one of his American friends defended the Scripture-based curriculum of the College, arguing that the curriculum was designed to train young men to be faithful pastors and preachers of the Word. He said that this overarching goal of the College had “unquestionably justified [the curriculum’s] existence,” as the students obtained “a complete knowledge of Holy Scripture.”⁷⁴ It was therefore clear to outside observers that Scripture had a primary place in the curriculum at the College.

As Spurgeon’s friend noted, the students came out of the College with a “complete

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Spurgeon, “A Plea for the Pastors’ College,” 252.

⁷³*Autobiography*, 2:149.

⁷⁴George C. Lorimer, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: The Puritan Preacher in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: James H. Earle, Publisher, 1892), 132.

knowledge” of the Bible. This was because the students spent much of their time studying the text of the Bible in its original languages. Classes were taught on whole books of the Bible and students were able to do further research with the aid of commentaries and other literary helps supplied for them in the College’s library.⁷⁵ Spurgeon thus made sure that the curriculum at the College provided the students with heavy dosages of Scripture, which is what one would expect from someone committed to the priority of word ministry.

2. Theology-driven Spurgeon also stated that theology would be the students’ “main science.”⁷⁶ He was persuaded that preachers of the gospel needed to be instructed in theology. Theological studies, however, were not to be pursued merely for the sake of acquiring knowledge. Theology, for Spurgeon, was linked to mission. He said, “It cannot do any hurt to the most lively evangelist to be also a sound theologian, and it may often be the means of saving him from gross blunders.”⁷⁷ For Spurgeon, then, good theology produces good evangelism.

As mentioned above, Spurgeon made sure that the theology taught at the College was Calvinistic, or as he often called it, “Puritanic.” He was unapologetically committed to the “old ways” of the Puritans, regarding all new “ologies” as “dilutions of the truth” and “old, rusted heresies, tinkered up again, and sent abroad with a new face put upon them.”⁷⁸ This was why the doctrines of grace permeated the courses on theology taught at the College. Spurgeon was opposed to the “broad liberal manner” of teaching “which presents a number of viewpoints and leaves the ultimate choice to the student.”⁷⁹ Tutors were required to teach the doctrines of grace

⁷⁵Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2,” 80.

⁷⁶Spurgeon, “A Plea for the Pastors’ College,” 252.

⁷⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Forward,” *S&T* (May 1874): 221.

⁷⁸*Autobiography*, 2:149.

with uncompromising commitment. Because Spurgeon was committed to not leaving “the doctrinal teaching of the Institution vague and undefined,” he encouraged men who did not hold to Puritan theology to go to other institutions.⁸⁰ This commitment created doctrinal unity and protected the College from doctrinal error. Near the end of his life, Spurgeon reported that, almost without exception, the men who had studied at the College remained firm in their commitment to the doctrines of grace.⁸¹

The study of Calvinistic theology at the College was not a dry academic pursuit. Rather, Calvinistic theology was meant to keep students rooted in the gospel and committed to the proclamation of the gospel. This is why the College motto was “Et Teneo, Et Teneor” (“I hold and am held”). Spurgeon wanted his students to hold and to be held by the cross of Christ. He said, “We labour to hold forth the cross of Christ with a bold hand among the sons of men, because that cross holds us fast by its attractive power.”⁸² Spurgeon aimed to train students who would be gripped by the gospel so that they would be better proclaimers of the gospel, and he believed that the best articulation of the gospel was found in the theology of the Puritans.

3. Training in teaching and preaching In his comprehensive vision statement for the College, Spurgeon also stated that students would study the “art of teaching” and that “the proclamation and exposition of the gospel” would be “their first business.”⁸³ Spurgeon therefore believed that teaching and preaching should be a significant part of the College’s curriculum.

⁷⁹Nicholls, *Lights to the World*, 39.

⁸⁰*Autobiography*, 2:150.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 2:149-50.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Spurgeon, “A Plea for the Pastors’ College,” 252.

This is not surprising given his commitment to the priority of word ministry, as teaching and preaching could be considered the essence of word ministry.

Spurgeon initially had mixed feelings about the value of training students to speak well. He said in 1870 that elocution classes were of “dubious value since no instructor could teach in the absence of aptitude.”⁸⁴ But within a couple years, training in diction became standard and classes on rhetoric were offered regularly. By 1871, Spurgeon’s belief in the importance of training his students to be effective communicators was solidified. This was because he wanted the students to be able to reach the working classes of England. He knew that the Devil did not care for “dialectics...eclectic homiletics...or Germanic objectives and subjectives,” so he trained his students in elocution that they might “pelt him (i.e. the Devil) with Anglo-Saxon in the name of God.”⁸⁵

Spurgeon was keenly aware of the general rule that stated that, although God can use the preaching of the unlearned to reach the learned, men would usually be used among their own social class. Thus, in the age of the rise of general education, Spurgeon knew that he would need to train men who could hold the attention of an educated audience, not driving them away by a “glaring ignorance of the simplest rules of correct speech.”⁸⁶ He wanted the College to be a place where men who were lacking in education could be instructed on how to preach in a way that people could understand and accept.⁸⁷ Therefore, because the gospel is inherently a verbal

⁸⁴*Annual Paper Concerning the Lord’s Work in Connection with the Pastors’ College*, 1870, 13; *Outline of the Lord’s Work by the Pastor’s College and its Kindred Organisations at the Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1869), 11, quoted in Bebbington, “Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education,” 224.

⁸⁵Spurgeon, “The Ministry Needed by the Churches, and Measures for Providing It,” 218.

⁸⁶Nicholls, *Lights to the World*, 31.

⁸⁷*Autobiography*, 2:148.

message, and because Spurgeon was committed to the priority of gospel proclamation, the College provided classes on speaking well.

Outside of these classes, other efforts were made to help students with their speaking abilities. Every Thursday morning a student would read a prepared sermon in front of the other students and tutors. The sermon was then analyzed and critiqued by the students and tutors. This exercise was used to polish the students' speaking ability and give them experience speaking in front of large groups.⁸⁸ As mentioned above, the Friday afternoon lectures given by Spurgeon were "full of practicalities" regarding preaching. The lectures make it clear, however, that Spurgeon's "chief concern was not with the mechanics of sermon production and presentation, but with the preacher's spirituality."⁸⁹ Spurgeon believed that the preacher's inward disposition was always more important than his outward ability. This emphasis on the student's spirituality will be discussed below, but first the broad nature of the College's curriculum will be briefly mentioned.

4. Broad in scope Spurgeon believed that the students should interact with a wide variety of subjects while at the College, saying, "with all knowledge they [should] intermeddle."⁹⁰ He wanted the curriculum at the College to be balanced, as the following list of subjects taught illustrates: Scripture, doctrine, church history, world history, basic astronomy, chemistry, zoology, geology, botany, moral science (i.e. ethics), metaphysics, mathematics, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, composition and style, poetry, oratory, and church administration.⁹¹ The purpose of a

⁸⁸Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2," 83.

⁸⁹Ibid., 84.

⁹⁰Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastors' College," 252.

⁹¹Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2," 80-81.

broad curriculum was to enable young preachers “to proclaim the gospel with interest and relevance.”⁹² For example, Spurgeon wanted physical science to be taught to the students, not only for the sake of general knowledge, but also because this subject provided a “wide field of illustration” for preachers to use in their sermons.⁹³ The College’s broad curriculum, therefore, served the purpose of preaching.

This section has illustrated that every aspect of the College’s curriculum served to train men to be effective in word ministry. The mere transmission of knowledge was never the aim of the College’s curriculum. Knowledge was transmitted for the purpose of effective gospel proclamation.

iii. Spiritual Disciplines

Books and parchments should be prized, but prayer and meditation should be supreme. The head should be stored, but the heart also should be fed with heavenly food.⁹⁴

“Spirituality was crucial”⁹⁵ at the College, serving as the “determinative foundation”⁹⁶ of the entire educational process. Spurgeon and the tutors consistently emphasized the spiritual, rather than the academic, growth of the College students. The devotional life of the students was fostered by encouraging them to read Puritan works in their private devotions and by requiring them to attend morning prayer meetings at the College and evening prayer meetings at the Tabernacle. There was also an afternoon prayer meeting once a week for the students, and there

⁹²Ibid., 81.

⁹³*Autobiography*, 3:146.

⁹⁴Spurgeon, “A Plea for the Pastors’ College,” 252.

⁹⁵Ian M. Randall, “‘To Give the First Place to Spiritual Fervour’: Priorities for Seminary Education,” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 7, no. 2 (January 2007): 15.

⁹⁶Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, trans. John W. Doberstein (1963; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1975), 10.

were daily efforts to pray for missionaries.⁹⁷ Spurgeon said in 1881 that “frequent meetings for prayer” were needed in order to maintain “a high tone of spirituality” and in order to promote “a vigorous spiritual life among those who are preparing to be under-shepherds of Christ’s flock.”⁹⁸ A fervent prayer life was therefore seen as a necessary component in the preparation of men who had devoted their lives to word ministry.

Another way that Spurgeon and the tutors cultivated the students’ spiritual life was by keeping them in close and constant contact with the life of the church. The College, by design, was connected to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. This allowed students from the College to experience fellowship with mature believers. Regarding the good effect that this had on the students, Spurgeon said, “It has often done me good to hear the students say that they had been warned against losing their spirituality during their College course; but they had, on the contrary, proved that their piety had been deepened and increased through association with their brethren and the many godly men and women with whom they were constantly brought into contact.”⁹⁹ The students’ spiritual life was therefore strengthened because of their proximity with other believers from a local church.

This emphasis on the spiritual life of the students was due to Spurgeon’s belief that “a truly spiritual College” would be “the readiest way in which to bless the churches.”¹⁰⁰ He was convinced that a College that produced spiritually strong students would in turn produce

⁹⁷See “Annual Paper Concerning The Lord’s Work In Connection With The Pastors’ College, Newington, London: 1882-83,” *S&T* (June 1883): 288, for a schedule of the “Cycle of Daily Prayer” that the students used to guide their prayers for missionaries.

⁹⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Pastors’ College,” *S&T* (June 1881): 304.

⁹⁹*Autobiography*, 3:125.

¹⁰⁰C. H. Spurgeon *Autobiography: The Full Harvest, 1860-1892* (1973; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 96.

spiritually strong churches, which would then be a spiritually strong witness to the world. The spiritual health of the students at the College was thus directly connected to their effectiveness in word ministry.

iv. Practical Ministry

It was Spurgeon's ambition that the College produce students who were "thoroughly furnished unto every good work."¹⁰¹ This was surely accomplished, as Spurgeon's students were engaged in all sorts of "good works" both during and after their time at the College. There were many opportunities for the College men to put their studies into practice. During the application and interview process, prospective students had to agree to undertake any work assigned to them while they were at the College. This gave Spurgeon the ability to send many students out on preaching assignments each weekend.¹⁰² Spurgeon strategically deployed students throughout London and southeast England to start new churches, so that by 1870 he could report that forty churches had been launched in the suburbs of London alone.¹⁰³

Other agencies were created through the College to help with outreach. For a while, there was the Home Visitation Society, formed by students with the desire to deliver Spurgeon's printed sermons to homes throughout various districts.¹⁰⁴ There was the Pastor's College Society of Evangelists¹⁰⁵ that supported itinerant gospel preachers. And there was the Pastor's College

¹⁰¹Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastors' College," 252.

¹⁰²*Annual Paper Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with the Pastors' College*, 1870, 17. Spurgeon was convinced that "ministers discover how to preach by preaching, even as men learn to swim by swimming." C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Paper Concerning The Lord's Work In Connection With The Pastors' College, Newington, London: 1884-85," *S&T* (June 1885): 310.

¹⁰³*Annual Paper Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with the Pastors' College*, 1870, 16. Spurgeon's church planting efforts through the College will be further discussed in chapter four.

¹⁰⁴Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2," 85.

¹⁰⁵This Society will be further discussed in chapter four.

Missionary Association, founded in 1888 for the purpose of gathering funds for men from the College who were called to serve overseas but who lacked the support of a missionary society. The College had sent out men to preach in other nations as early as 1863, when a young Jewish convert embarked on a preaching tour in Poland at the expense of the College.¹⁰⁶

The College was willing to support any ministry that “promised...to further the gathering-in of the people into the Church.”¹⁰⁷ By Spurgeon’s death in 1892, 863 men had been trained at the College, 627 of them serving as Baptist pastors, missionaries, and evangelists, and more than 90,000 people had been baptized in churches led by Spurgeon’s students. Spurgeon’s prayer that “the missionary spirit should be increased among the brethren” was being answered, as men from the College went to serve in India, China, Japan, Africa, Spain, Italy, the West Indies, South America, Australia, and America.¹⁰⁸ These men sent out from the College fulfilled Spurgeon’s desire to train men who would effectively proclaim the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth.

Whether it was through weekend pulpit supply, church planting, chapel building, sermon distribution, itinerant preaching, or sending men overseas, it is clear that each of these ministries fulfilled Spurgeon’s vision for the College. It was the evangelistic ethos of the College that encouraged the students in these “missional direction[s].”¹⁰⁹ In other words, these practical ministries were spawned by the College students because of the evangelistic, or word ministry, orientation of the College. Without exception, these ministries were word rather than deed

¹⁰⁶Pike, *Life and Work*, 3:77.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Autobiography*, 3:154-55. See Spurgeon, “Annual Paper Concerning The Lord’s Work In Connection With The Pastors’ College, 1884-85,” 317-34, for an extensive cataloguing of first-hand accounts of students from the College who were serving on the mission field.

¹⁰⁹Randall, “A Mode of Training,” 3.

focused, as the College students embodied Spurgeon's commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation.

v. Tutors

The tutors should be men of equal learning and grace, sound scholars, but much more sound divines, men of culture, but even more decidedly men of God.¹¹⁰

The men whom Spurgeon selected to teach at the College had to meet the same qualifications as the students. They had to show evidence of being called to word ministry, they had to have experience preaching and teaching, and they had to be committed to teaching orthodox Calvinistic doctrine. Many of them had pastored at least one church before coming to the College, and though they were not required to be pastors during their tutorship, many of them were. Besides Spurgeon and Rogers, there were three men who did the majority of the teaching: Frederick Marchant, Archibald Fergusson, and James Archer Spurgeon. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, these three men pastored churches for most of their adult life. Marchant pastored three churches, retiring from the third one in 1887. Fergusson planted a church in the town of Ealing that started in a barn and grew to over 400 members. He ministered there for twenty-eight years. James Archer Spurgeon pastored several churches before his brother asked him to come serve as the Vice-President of the College and co-pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. During his time at the College and the Tabernacle, he also pastored a church in Croydon until his death.¹¹¹

The students at the College required tutors who could provide them with personal care and develop their practical skills in church planting and ministry. This is why Spurgeon

¹¹⁰Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastors' College," 252.

¹¹¹Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2," 76-77.

personally selected and appointed men like Marchant, Fergusson, and his brother.¹¹² These were men who were called and gifted in word ministry and men who faithfully served local churches through preaching and teaching. These men were just as committed to the priority of word ministry as Spurgeon, which is why he hired them to train his students.

f. Commitment to Meeting the Physical Needs of Students

Although Spurgeon's College is a clear example of the priority of gospel proclamation in Spurgeon's ministry, it also serves as an example of his commitment to meet people's physical needs. Biographer Tom Nettles agrees, saying that Spurgeon's "love for gospel ministers, and his desire to see them well-equipped theologically and practically, was matched by his concern for their physical well-being."¹¹³ As discussed earlier, Spurgeon was committed to providing theological education to men who could not afford it, determining to remove any hindrance that would keep them from attaining it. He said that he was "determined" to never "refuse a man on account of absolute poverty, but rather to provide him with needful lodging, board, and raiment, that he might not be hindered on that account."¹¹⁴ This commitment is all the more remarkable when it is realized that the majority of students accepted to the College "were generally of a class too poor to do anything in the way of paying for their own support."¹¹⁵ Spurgeon's commitment to meet the physical needs of his students was thus not limited to a few isolated cases. He embraced the reality that, in order to fulfill the purpose he had for the College, there would be great financial cost to himself, a cost that he and his wife happily accepted.

¹¹²Ibid., 77.

¹¹³Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 344.

¹¹⁴*Autobiography*, 2:149.

¹¹⁵Pike, *Life and Work*, 2:230.

Many of the men seeking admission to the College were not only financially poor, but also educationally poor. As a result, Spurgeon helped these men by removing all educational qualifications from the admission process. Spurgeon was willing to train men who had no educational background, even men who could not read. He says, “We...placed the literary qualifications of admission so low that even brethren who could not read have been able to enter.”¹¹⁶ Spurgeon claims that these students proved to be among the “most useful” in the ministry, convincing him that “a man of real ability as a speaker, of deep piety, and genuine faith, may be, by force of birth and circumstances, deprived of educational advantages, and yet when helped a little, he may develop into a mighty worker for Christ.”¹¹⁷ He concludes, “it would be a serious loss to the Church to deny such a man instruction because it was his misfortune to miss it in his youth.”¹¹⁸ Spurgeon thus accepted men from all socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, men who could not contribute one penny to their education, and men who could not read.

This section has illustrated Spurgeon’s commitment to caring for those with legitimate physical needs. His commitment to the priority of word ministry did not come at the expense of addressing physical needs. The purpose of the College may have been to train preachers of the gospel, but this purpose was not at odds with Spurgeon’s desire to help meet tangible needs. In fact, he even said that meeting the physical needs of ministers is the best type of social ministry: “To help a needy saint is altogether a good work, and to relieve a poor servant of God in the

¹¹⁶*Autobiography*, 2:149.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

ministry is best of all.”¹¹⁹ Although word ministry was prioritized at the College, deed ministry was not forgotten or neglected.

g. Critique of the College

Spurgeon’s College was often criticized for low academic standards and for being anti-intellectual. One of the necessary results of Spurgeon’s vision to offer sound theological education to the educationally disadvantaged was a rejection of external examinations. The College did administer internal assessments of the students, usually conducted by James Archer Spurgeon, but the students were not required to take public examinations. James Spurgeon wrote in 1887 that the College was not bound by the “arbitrary regulations of some external authority, with its demands for studies adapted to meet the requirements of its examiners, rather than the duties of a pastor’s life.”¹²⁰ Bebbington points out that Spurgeon’s approach to theological education was not the result of anti-intellectualism, but was rather “the result of an intensely felt sense of priorities.”¹²¹ This chapter has argued that Spurgeon and his brother were committed to the priority of training men to be effective proclaimers of the gospel, a priority that the Spurgeon brothers were unwilling to sacrifice in order to obtain a measure of academic credibility.

G. Holden Pike quotes Dr. Campbell, who acknowledged that the College had succeeded in its desire to keep word ministry the priority without neglecting to maintain academic integrity. “Spurgeon,” said Dr. Campbell, “...is not the foe of learning by any means, but he is more the friend of souls.”¹²² The well-known Earl of Shaftesbury acknowledged the success of the College

¹¹⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1875): 344.

¹²⁰*AP*, 1886-87, 12, quoted in Bebbington, “Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education,” 228.

¹²¹Bebbington, “Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education,” 228.

¹²²Pike, *Life and Work*, 3:78.

in fulfilling its purpose when he said, “Nothing is adapted to meet the wants of the people but the gospel message brought home to their hearts,” and no one has “done a better service in this evangelistic work than the pupils trained in Mr. Spurgeon’s College.”¹²³ Spurgeon was firm in his belief that theological education was intended for the sole purpose of producing men to be skillful and winsome proclaimers of the gospel. At least some of his contemporaries thought that he had succeeded in this approach. Spurgeon would not sacrifice the priority of word ministry on the altar of academic standards.

h. Conclusion

Though Spurgeon was never formally educated,¹²⁴ he became a life-long learner when, as a child, he discovered the Puritan classics in an unused room in his grandfather’s house. He devoured the theology of those books, and upon visiting the house as an adult, he teared up when he saw that the old books were still there. He hoped that “some other boy will love them, and live to revive that grand old divinity which will yet be to England her balm and benison.”¹²⁵ Through the ministry of the Pastor’s College, he was able to lead hundreds of “other boys” to love and study Puritan theology.

The College, however, embodied more than Spurgeon’s devotion to Puritanic theology. It also embodied his passion for the conversion of the lost through the proclamation of the gospel.

¹²³Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk*, 143.

¹²⁴Spurgeon was not opposed to the idea of formal education. He realized that “solid learning is never an encumbrance, and is often a great means of usefulness,” and he “felt inclined to avail [himself] of the opportunity of attaining it.” As a teenager, he hoped to be “useful without a College training,” but he nevertheless “consented to the opinion of friends that [he] should be more useful with it.” This led him to seek admission to the Baptist College at Stepney in 1852, but due to a mistake by a maid at Dr. Angus’ house [a tutor at Stepney], he missed his admission interview. This strange turn of events was for Spurgeon God’s way of directing his steps away from College training. *Autobiography*, 1:241-42.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 1:23.

The ethos of the College, from admission requirements to curriculum, from students to tutors, was one of evangelistic zeal. However, Spurgeon was not naive enough to think that this ethos at the College was enough to make men passionate for the souls of men. He knew that only God could do that, saying, “No college, no bishop, no human ordination, can make a man a minister; but he who can feel...the strugglings of an impassioned longing to win the souls of men, may hear in the air the voice of God saying, ‘Son of man, I have made thee a watchman.’”¹²⁶ Spurgeon sought to train men who had already heard the voice God calling them to win souls, because he knew that this call to word ministry cannot be taught or created by any college.

Knowing that this love for souls can only be created by God, Spurgeon nevertheless urged his students to “love the souls of men.” He once asked them, “How can the ministers of God be smoking and drinking when souls are dying, and talking lightness and wantonness when sinners are perishing?”¹²⁷ He even told his students that, “if souls are not won, churches are not built up, and Christ is not glorified by you, I have lived in vain as to the master-work of my life.”¹²⁸ Spurgeon believed that, if the lost were not saved through the preaching of his students, then the work of the College was in vain.¹²⁹

As mentioned, the physical needs of the students were taken seriously and met with Spurgeon’s zealous generosity, but the meeting of those needs was always subservient to the great task of training proclaimers of the gospel. The College, Spurgeon’s most loved institution

¹²⁶*C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography: The Early Years* (1962; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2011), 384.

¹²⁷*Autobiography*, 3:155-56.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 3:159.

¹²⁹The *S&T* reports in 1891 that the education that the men received at the College had not quenched their evangelistic zeal, but rather “made them to be successful winners of souls.” *S&T* (June 1891): 259, quoted in Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth*, 372. Thus, a year before his death, Spurgeon was assured that the work of the College was not in vain.

and favorite ministry, was therefore word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational.

Chapter 3

Priority of Gospel Proclamation at the Stockwell Orphanage

Although Spurgeon ranked the Pastor's College ahead of the Stockwell Orphanage in importance, he considered both of these institutions to be the primary works connected to his church.¹ The work of the Orphanage was a pleasure to Spurgeon and he regularly encouraged his friends and supporters to join him in the "happy work" of caring for the fatherless.² Spurgeon loved caring for orphans because he believed that it was commanded by God and necessary for giving outward expression to pure religion,³ and that rescuing boys and girls from poverty and from the evil influences of the streets, and training them to know and serve Jesus, was "one of the noblest of Christian labours."⁴

Spurgeon believed that Jesus would care for orphans if he still walked the earth, saying that his disciples should therefore "do in his behalf what he would personally do if he were still among us in person."⁵ Though Spurgeon wanted his friends and supporters to be like Jesus in the area of orphan care, he was not an incarnationalist as defined by modern missiologists. This dissertation is arguing that Spurgeon was more akin to the representationalist than the incarnationalist, in that he believed that followers of Jesus are called to represent Jesus in the

¹C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 3 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), 30.

²C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *The Sword and the Trowel* (July 1874): 341; cf. idem, "Preface," *The Sword and the Trowel* (1884): iv. These and all subsequent references to *The Sword and the Trowel* (hereafter *S&T*) come from an eight-volume reprinted edition of the magazine published by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, TX from 1975-2006.

³C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage for Fatherless Boys, 1878-79," *S&T* (1879): 11.

⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Orphan, and Specially for the Stockwell Orphanage," *S&T* (1879): 12.

⁵*Ibid.*

world, not to be Jesus in the world. The above quote makes this clear. Spurgeon said that disciples of Jesus should do “in [Jesus’] behalf” what he would do if he were here. In other words, they should represent him, not incarnate him. The primary contention of this chapter is that Spurgeon’s mission work at the Orphanage was representational rather than incarnational, prioritistic rather than holistic, and word rather than deed oriented.

The Stockwell Orphanage was a ministry designed to meet the immediate physical needs of orphans in London. However, this chapter will argue that, although the Orphanage appears to be a deed-based ministry, it was in reality a deed and word ministry, with word taking the priority. This chapter will demonstrate that the physical needs of the children at the Orphanage were met with a view towards their spiritual needs being met through the gospel. In other words, this chapter will argue that Spurgeon’s largest and best-known social ministry was in fact a word-based ministry, where the meeting of children’s spiritual needs was the priority, and the meeting of their physical needs was secondary. If the thesis of this chapter is correct, then the overall thesis of this dissertation is strengthened considerably because Spurgeon’s other ministries are more obviously word-based, whereas the Orphanage does not immediately strike the reader as a word-based ministry. But when one begins to look at the original purpose statements for the Orphanage and consider Spurgeon’s vision for the Orphanage that he reiterated throughout his ministry, it becomes clear that the Orphanage was indeed a word, rather than deed, oriented ministry.

This chapter will begin with an overview of the origin and initial history of the Orphanage, followed by a discussion of Spurgeon’s role in the Orphanage and his approach to raising finances for the Orphanage. Two of the primary purposes of the Orphanage will then be given, followed by several clear examples of the central thesis of this chapter, namely, that word

ministry was the priority at the Orphanage. This chapter will close by highlighting Spurgeon's commitment to meeting the physical needs of the children at the Orphanage and by mentioning the fruit of the Orphanage, that is, some of the ways in which the Orphanage succeeded in fulfilling the purpose for which it was established. An overview of the origin and initial history of the Orphanage will now be given.

a. Origin and Initial History of the Orphanage

The founding of the Stockwell Orphanage was the result of a prayer meeting and a magazine. The firsthand testimony of an attendee at a Monday evening prayer meeting at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in August of 1866 proves that the Orphanage was the result of prayer. Pastor C. Welton, a student at the Pastor's College at that time, provides the following record of what happened that night:

Mr. Spurgeon said, "Dear friends, we are a huge church, and should be doing more for the Lord in this great city. I want us, to-night, to ask Him to send us *some new work*; and if we need money to carry it on, let us pray that *the means may also be sent*." Several of the students had been called to the platform to join with the deacons and elders in leading the assembly to the throne of grace, and to plead with God about the matter. While that mighty man of prayer, Mr. William Olney, was wrestling with the Lord, the beloved President knew that the answer had come. Had the Holy Spirit told him? It seemed so, for, walking lightly across the platform to where I was sitting, he said to me softly, "It's all right, Welton; you pray for the conversion of sinners, will you?" A few days after this Tabernacle prayer-meeting, Mrs. Hillyard wrote to the dear Pastor offering to entrust him with £20,000 for the purpose of founding an Orphanage for fatherless children. Here was *the new work and the money with which to begin it*. It was my conviction thirty years ago, as it is to-day, that the Stockwell Orphanage, as well as the money to found it, came from the Lord in answer to the petitions offered that Monday night. Surely, the Orphanage was born of prayer.⁶

To those who were present at that Monday night prayer meeting it was an unmistakable fact that the Orphanage was the result of the prayers of God's people.

As Welton mentioned in the above quote, the means that God used to answer the prayers

⁶*Autobiography*, 3:167, italics his.

of the people was a woman named Anne Hillyard, and the means that God used to lead Mrs. Hillyard to Spurgeon was his monthly magazine *The Sword and the Trowel*.⁷ At that time, Mrs. Hillyard was not a member or attendee at the Tabernacle.⁸ In fact, she was the widow of a Church of England clergyman. Interestingly, the Lord would answer the prayers of England's largest dissenting congregation through a member of the Established Church.

It was in August of 1866 (the same month as the abovementioned prayer meeting) that Mrs. Hillyard read an article in the *S&T* that led her to contact Spurgeon about starting an orphanage. The article was entitled, "The Holy War of the Present Hour." In this article, Spurgeon advocated the widespread distribution of anti-tractarian literature.⁹ But it was the following section of the article that caught Mrs. Hillyard's attention:

It is on our heart very heavily to stir up our friends to rescue some of the scholastic influence of our adversaries out of their hands. In the common schools of England church influence is out of all proportion with the number of the Episcopal body and the proportion of the Nonconforming churches. We have too much given up our children to the enemy...as it is, our Sabbath-schools have neutralized the evil to a large extent, but it ought not to be suffered to exist any longer; a great effort should be made to multiply our day-schools, and to render them distinctly religious, by teaching the gospel in them, and by labouring to bring the children, *as children*, to the Lord Jesus. The silly cry of "Nonsectarian" is duping many into the establishment of schools in which the most important part of wisdom, namely, the fear of the Lord, is altogether ignored; we trust this folly will soon be given up, and that we shall see schools in which all that we believe and hold dear shall be taught to the children of our poorer adherents.¹⁰

As this quote makes clear, and as will be discussed below, Spurgeon was seriously

⁷Spurgeon acknowledged this fact, saying, "Never let it be forgotten that in the mysterious arrangements of providence, 'The Sword and the Trowel' led to the founding of The Stockwell Orphanage." "Preface," *S&T* (1867): iv.

⁸She later became a member of the Tabernacle.

⁹Tractarianism (also known as "The Oxford Movement" or Puseyism – after Edward Pusey, one of the primary leaders of the movement) was a movement of High Church Anglicans who wanted to blend Roman Catholic traditions and theology with Anglicanism. The result was the development of an Anglo-Catholicism that swept across England in the middle of the nineteenth century.

¹⁰C. H. Spurgeon, "The Holy War of the Present Hour," *S&T* (August 1866): 343-44, italics his.

concerned about the decline of faithful religious instruction in the newly formed Board Schools (i.e., “the common schools of England”). The religious instruction that did take place in these schools was of an Established Church bent, which is why Spurgeon asked his readers to help him in the establishment of schools that would unapologetically teach the gospel and lead children to Jesus.¹¹ This is yet another example of what was argued for in the previous chapter, namely, that Spurgeon’s educational approach was thoroughly evangelistic, as he believed that one of the purposes of education was evangelism.

Although the article was primarily a plea from Spurgeon for help in educating the poor children of London, when Hillyard read the article, she had a slightly different idea as to how to address the situation. When Hillyard read the article, she knew immediately what she wanted to do with the £20,000 that her deceased husband had left her. Spurgeon says that she “had long cherished in her heart” the vision of caring for fatherless boys.¹² So, after reading the article, Hillyard wrote to Spurgeon and explained her idea to him and asked for help in carrying it out. Spurgeon received Hillyard’s letter just a few days after the Monday evening prayer meeting described above, leading him to believe that Hillyard’s sympathy for fatherless boys, and the funds she was willing to give to that end, were the answers to his prayers for a new work and the money needed to begin it.¹³

Hillyard’s vision of caring for fatherless boys is explained in more detail in a letter she wrote to Spurgeon in September 1866. She believed that there was a “great need” for an “Orphan

¹¹Peter Shepherd says that Spurgeon’s desire was to form a “great Christian public school...where boys could be taught the Gospel and brought, as children, to the Lord Jesus.” “Spurgeon’s Children,” *Baptist Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (April 2007): 90.

¹²*Autobiography*, 3:168.

¹³*Ibid.*

House” that would be available to boys without “votes nor patronage”¹⁴ and that would be “conducted upon simple gospel principles.”¹⁵ This is significant because it reveals that, even at the genesis of the Orphanage, the original visionary of the Institution desired that the Institution be built on the gospel. The Orphanage was, for Hillyard, not merely a social project designed to meet physical needs, but rather a gospel project designed to save souls. Hillyard states this explicitly in the same letter to Spurgeon mentioned above. After telling him that she has £20,000 that she would like to devote to the “training and education of a few orphan boys,” she says that “bringing the little ones to Jesus is [her] first and chief desire.”¹⁶ There is thus no question concerning Hillyard’s primary goal in establishing the Orphanage. Her “first and chief” ambition was for the gospel to be proclaimed and for children to come to know Jesus.

Therefore, though Hillyard wanted to establish an orphanage that would train and educate the orphans of London, she was primarily concerned about leading children to Jesus. It seems that what led Spurgeon to quickly adopt Hillyard’s vision as his own was their similar commitment to the priority of seeing children come to know Jesus. Both individuals wanted to address the legitimate physical needs of children in their city, but they both believed that meeting physical needs was a means to meeting spiritual needs. In other words, Hillyard and Spurgeon’s initial partnership, and their decades-long service together for the Orphanage, was the result of their shared view that Christian missions should be prioritistic in nature.

Spurgeon announced the building of the Orphanage in the *S&T* in October of 1866, and

¹⁴At that time, most orphanages required applicants to secure a certain number of votes from “patrons” in order to be accepted. This process required much time and money, two things that most widows lacked, which is why Hillyard and Spurgeon did not want to use that mode of entrance at the Stockwell Orphanage.

¹⁵*Autobiography*, 3:169.

¹⁶*Ibid.*; Robert Shindler confirms this as Hillyard’s primary concern. He said that Hillyard wished that, “through the Orphanage, boys might by divine grace be converted.” *From the Usher’s Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 165.

in January of 1867, a plot of land in Stockwell was purchased.¹⁷ The announcement and purchase of the land in Stockwell seemed to open the floodgates of generosity among Spurgeon's supporters, as several wealthy merchants and leaders from the Tabernacle began to give generously. The houses built for the Orphanage were named after individuals or groups who gave substantially to the work. For example, a Mr. W. Higgs and his workmen gave enough to fund the building of one house, a house that was then called "The Workmen's House." The Tabernacle Sunday-school contributed enough to fund a house, so it was called "The Sunday-school House."¹⁸ Through the prayers and generosity of God's people, Hillyard's dream of a home for fatherless boys became a reality.

The growth of the Orphanage was steady through the 1870s, but by the end of the decade, there was a growing sentiment that there should also be an Orphanage for girls.¹⁹ In a meeting at the Tabernacle on May 20, 1879, Spurgeon acknowledged that the various Institutions and organizations of the Tabernacle had made a "fair beginning," but that they were now ready for a "new departure."²⁰ He told his people that Hillyard had sent him £50 towards the establishment of a Girls' Orphanage. He did not think, however, that it was the right time to begin such a venture, as he was not physically well and funds were scarce. However, Hillyard, being fully

¹⁷Stockwell is a district in inner city London, south of the Thames and approximately two miles from the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

¹⁸*Autobiography*, 3:172-73.

¹⁹Spurgeon mentioned the need for a Girl's Orphanage as early as 1871. He said in the "Preface" to the *S&T* of that year that a "Girl's Orphanage would be of the utmost value" and that he "sometimes blushes when [he is] accused of caring for only the male sex." *S&T* (1871): iv. He also told readers of the *S&T* in 1875 that when the Boy's Orphanage is more financially stable, "it may be the Lord's will [to] enable us to build a Girls' Orphanage too." "Notes," *S&T* (September 1875): 449. One of the reasons why Spurgeon knew that a Girls' Orphanage was necessary was because he had often been unable to help widows with large families because they did not have any boys. He said, "However urgent the case, we have been unable to relieve very deserving mothers, simply because their children are not boys." *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 4 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), 323.

²⁰*Autobiography*, 4:321.

assured that more funds would come in, told Spurgeon to keep the £50 and consider it “the first brick” of the Girls’ Orphanage.²¹ Spurgeon said that he could not refuse the gift that Hillyard had “forced upon” him, saying that he was “compelled by constraining grace” and “driven” to build a Girls’ Orphanage, and that he would wait “to see prayer and faith open a new chapter of marvels.”²²

After Spurgeon’s address at the Tabernacle on May 20, 1879, funds for the Girls’ Orphanage began to come in. There was a house directly across from the Boys’ Orphanage that Spurgeon and the Trustees had attempted to purchase for some time, but due to a lack of funds, they had been unable to do so until June 6, 1879. On this date, the Trustees purchased the house and the adjoining meadow. The purchase of these properties and the building of several new houses for the girls gradually made the Orphanage complex into a complete square. Hillyard’s initial vision of a home for fatherless boys was thus fulfilled and expanded. The Stockwell Orphanage, at its peak, held five hundred children, two hundred and fifty boys and two hundred and fifty girls. Through the Orphanage, a multitude of children from the greater London area had their physical and spiritual needs provided for, thanks to Spurgeon’s endorsement of Hillyard’s vision of a gospel-centered home for fatherless boys.

b. Spurgeon’s Role in the Orphanage

Although it was Hillyard who cast the initial vision for the Orphanage, Spurgeon implemented her vision and saw that it was carried out. Spurgeon served as President of the Orphanage, while also serving on its Board of Trustees. He presided over the meetings of the Trustees as long as he was able, and when he was ill he was kept up to date by reviewing copies

²¹Ibid., 4:323.

²²Ibid., 4:322.

of the minutes from the Trustee meetings. Though the Orphanage was led by a group of men, Spurgeon usually had the final say on any major decision. Important matters of business were “subject to the approval of the President.”²³ Although Spurgeon had final authority at the Orphanage, he was quick to acknowledge the people who carried out the business side of the work. In 1877, he said “no praise was due to himself in managing the Orphanage,” as it was his “beloved brother and the other trustees who so regularly conduct the business.”²⁴ He also praised Mr. Charlesworth (the Headmaster) and his staff, acknowledging that they were the ones who actually carried out the work of the Orphanage.

In the early days of the Orphanage, Spurgeon personally visited each applicant. This proved to be an expensive practice, as Spurgeon “could not listen to the sad stories of the poor widows without temporarily relieving their necessities.”²⁵ This is another example of Spurgeon’s commitment to meeting the physical needs of people in desperate situations. As the Orphanage grew, Spurgeon stopped interviewing the applicants personally, leaving the Trustees with that responsibility. In the 1870’s and 1880’s, Spurgeon’s primary role was to raise funds and awareness for the Orphanage. The ways in which he garnered financial support for the Orphanage will now be discussed.

c. Spurgeon’s Financing of the Orphanage

Spurgeon was convinced that it was easier to raise money for the Orphanage than for the College. He said, “Many will give to an orphanage out of natural compassion who will not

²³Ibid., 3:177.

²⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1877): 335-36.

²⁵*Autobiography*, 3:177.

contribute to a college out of zeal for the truth.”²⁶ It seems that Spurgeon believed that the Orphanage attracted funds that could have otherwise been used for the College, and because he was committed to the priority of gospel proclamation, this may have slightly upset him. He told his friends and supporters that “this need not be,” and that they should give to the Lord in a more “conscientious manner.”²⁷ These statements seem to imply that Spurgeon was somewhat disappointed with the fact that the Orphanage drained funds from other, more explicitly word-oriented ministries. However, these comments notwithstanding, Spurgeon worked tirelessly to raise the necessary funds for the Orphanage. He also gave enormous amounts of his own money to the Orphanage, so it cannot be concluded that Spurgeon neglected the finances of the Orphanage, or that the Orphanage was relegated to a second-class ministry. Spurgeon worked diligently in order to meet the physical needs of the Orphanage, a work that caused him great mental, physical, and spiritual strain.

The primary method that Spurgeon employed to raise the necessary funds to build and sustain the Orphanage was based on his belief that God would “never set us to do a thing without meaning to help us through with it.”²⁸ In other words, Spurgeon believed that if God had given him the opportunity to build and run an orphanage, then He would surely provide for all of its needs. Thus, the method used by the Orphanage to raise funds was faith in a God who supplies the needs of his people. This faith was fueled and expressed by Spurgeon’s commitment to lead his church and supporters to pray fervently and often that the Lord would meet the needs of the Orphanage.

²⁶Spurgeon, “College and Orphanage,” 133.

²⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Preface,” *S&T* (1870): iii.

²⁸*Autobiography*, 3:174.

Spurgeon based his approach on that of his friend George Müller of Bristol. In a sermon at the Tabernacle in 1867, he said, “I hope the day may soon come when the noble example which has been set by our esteemed brother, Mr. Müller, of Bristol, will be more constantly followed in all the Lord’s work.”²⁹ He then reminded his congregation of several examples of ways that God had provided for the needs of the Orphanage. He reminded them of the recent Monday night prayer meeting that had been devoted to the Orphanage, and how this prayer meeting resulted in the Lord leading someone to give £500 to the Orphanage on the next Saturday, and how on the following Monday, the Lord led another person to give £600, and how on the following Tuesday someone else gave £500 to the Orphanage. Spurgeon’s point was that, as the people prayed, the Lord faithfully provided for the finances of the Orphanage.

Spurgeon was convinced that through the prayers and faith of the people of God, the needs of the Orphanage would be met. This does not mean that he never mentioned publicly the financial needs of the Orphanage. In the “Notes” section of every edition of his monthly magazine, he mentioned the financial needs of the Orphanage. “I cannot expect,” he said, “the Lord to inform his people of the needs of the Orphanage by miracle, and, therefore, I feel bound to let them know by the magazine.”³⁰ He was opposed, however, to “the old custom of our general Societies,” who “first look out for a regular income, and get subscribers,” sending out collectors to ask people to pay certain percentages.³¹ Spurgeon said that those who followed this method did not trust God, but rather trusted subscribers, and that “if we go by that rule, we shall

²⁹Ibid., 3:173. Spurgeon also made it clear that his approach was not exactly the same as Müller’s. He said, “Our own modes of action are distinct from those of this revered man of God (i.e. Müller); it would be vain presumption to try to imitate him.” “George Müller’s Report for 1867-68,” *S&T* (1868): 408. The greatest difference between Spurgeon and Müller seems to be that Spurgeon did not hesitate to consistently advertise the needs of the Orphanage and ask his supporters to contribute financially to the work.

³⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “A Sequel,” *S&T* (June 1872): 260.

³¹*Autobiography*, 3:174.

see very little, and have no room for believing.”³² Spurgeon’s fundraising approach was thus somewhere between that of George Müller and the typical philanthropic societies of his day. He did not recruit monthly donors, but he also did not hesitate to publicly advertise the needs of the Orphanage on a monthly basis through *The Sword and the Trowel*.

d. Purposes of the Orphanage

As noted above, the primary reason why Hillyard and Spurgeon initiated the work of the Stockwell Orphanage was to reach children for Jesus by meeting their immediate physical needs. This was the primary purpose of the Orphanage, but there was another purpose for its existence, one more secondary in nature, but important nonetheless. This secondary purpose will now be discussed, followed by further discussion of the primary purpose of the Orphanage.

i. To Educate Poor Children in London

The secondary purpose of the Orphanage was the result of Spurgeon’s desire that the education of poor children in London be more explicitly biblical, a desire that he made plain in his article “The Holy War of the Present Hour” in 1866.³³ Spurgeon was not the only one with such desires. Other dissenting evangelicals in the nineteenth century had undertaken educational initiatives among the poor children of London, and these Dissenters were usually evangelistically motivated in their educational pursuits. For example, Andrew Fuller said in 1814, “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.”³⁴ And Rev. E. Irving said in 1826, “Exertions to circulate the Scriptures must be vain

³²Ibid.

³³Spurgeon, “The Holy War of the Present Hour,” 339-45.

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.”³⁵ Spurgeon was no different from Fuller and Irving, as all of these men were Dissenters who desired to educate the poor children of London for the purpose of evangelism.

Therefore, the secondary purpose of the Orphanage was educational in nature. The Education Act of 1870 was enacted to provide government-sponsored education for children ages five through thirteen that would be administered through local school boards. In these newly formed Board Schools, as they were called, religious instruction had to be free from any catechismal or denominational instruction. Spurgeon was not happy with this novel approach to educating children. He said, “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.”³⁶ The Education Act of 1870 provoked many dissenting evangelicals, leading them to establish their own educational institutions. This change in the approach to education is one of the factors that led to the birth of Spurgeon’s Orphanage.

It can be argued that even this secondary purpose of the Orphanage is an example of Spurgeon’s primary commitment to word ministry. Spurgeon wanted to educate illiterate children in order that they might be able to read and understand the Bible, and he wanted them to read and understand the Bible so that they would come to know Jesus. Thus, the Orphanage was a deed ministry that served as a means to the end of word ministry.

Spurgeon’s desire to educate orphans was not only evangelistic, but also pragmatic. He

³⁴Michael Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 1: General Educational Concerns,” *Baptist Quarterly* 31, no. 8 (October 1986): 397, n. 8.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶*The Inquirer*, June 18th, 1870, quoted in Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 1,” 387.

believed that a good education would allow children to grow up and become successful in business. This is illustrated by a letter that he wrote to the children at the Orphanage in December 1887. He told them that it was his aim that they be happy while they were at the Orphanage, so that they would “grow up and go out into business.”³⁷ This desire was always made clear at the beginning of the *Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage*. For example, the *Annual Report for 1876-77* said, “The Institution [seeks to provide the children] with an education which fits them to take good positions in the world”³⁸ and to give them “a useful rather than an ornamental education.”³⁹ The *Annual Report* also stated that, since the boys who had already left the Orphanage had been successful, the educational approach of the Institution was fully justified.⁴⁰

The Orphanage aimed to educate children in order to give them the opportunity to be successful in the world. But, as mentioned above, this was not the only reason why education was deemed important at the Orphanage. Ultimately, Spurgeon wanted the children in the Orphanage to be educated so that they would come to know Jesus through his Word. The priority of word ministry as the primary purpose of the Orphanage will now be discussed.

ii. To Glorify God By Teaching Children the Gospel

In a sermon in 1884, Spurgeon boasted of a wealthy woman who had forsaken the comforts of life in order to start an orphanage, referring of course to Anne Hillyard.⁴¹ Spurgeon

³⁷Iain H. Murray, *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 109.

³⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage for Fatherless Boys, Clapham Road, 1876-77,” *S&T* (July 1877): 342.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 345.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

told his congregation that Hillyard's intention was to establish a place where children could be cared for, but not just for their sake. Her desire was that the children be looked after for Christ's sake, "that *He* might be glorified."⁴² Both Hillyard and Spurgeon believed that the primary way that God would be glorified through the Orphanage would be by teaching children the simple principles of the gospel and encouraging them to trust Jesus for their salvation.⁴³

In 1867, as the Orphanage began to take shape, Spurgeon said that the orphans would be cared for by Christian people and that the Orphanage would be directly connected with a Christian church. Spurgeon also said that he hoped that ministers and missionaries would be produced by the efforts of the Orphanage. This was sure to happen, he said, because the care of the children's souls "will be our first and highest concern."⁴⁴ In another article in the *S&T* from the same year, Spurgeon again made the purpose of the Orphanage clear. He said, "We have no object in view but the glory of God, by the instruction of fatherless boys in the ways of the Lord, having a special view to their souls' salvation."⁴⁵

The glory of God in the salvation of children would become an oft-repeated refrain concerning the purpose of the Orphanage. In January 1868, Spurgeon said that, through the Orphanage, "we have no object in view but [God's] glory, and the good of immortal souls."⁴⁶ In

⁴¹When Spurgeon went to meet Hillyard at her home, he began to wonder whether the letter he had received from her was a hoax, as the very modest style of her home did not suggest that she had access to such a great amount of money. Spurgeon discovered, however, that "it was only by the exercise of the most rigid economy that the good woman had been able to save that large sum." *Autobiography*, 3:170.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 3:167, italics his.

⁴³W. Y. Fullerton, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Biography* (1920; repr. Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 201.

⁴⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "Our Orphanage," *S&T* (1867): 233.

⁴⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Stockwell Orphanage," *S&T* (1867): 325.

⁴⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Stockwell Orphanage," *S&T* (January 1868): 40.

1876, Spurgeon said that, through the Orphanage (and his other ministries), he only sought “the glory of God and the good of our fellow men.”⁴⁷ In a special report on the College and the Orphanage in March 1881, he said, “We have only sought the glory of God,” whether in training young men for the ministry or taking care of children, and that through these efforts “*God has been glorified.*”⁴⁸

The primary purpose of the Orphanage was always made clear in the first section of the *Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage*. For example, the *Report for 1876-77* said, “The great object (of the Orphanage) is to train the boys in the fear of the Lord, hoping by God’s blessing they may be truly converted before they leave us.”⁴⁹ In an article written by Spurgeon in May 1880, he challenged his friends and supporters to consider the needs of orphans, reminding them that the “supreme aim” of the Orphanage was to raise children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”⁵⁰ In the next month’s issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon reminded his readers that the work of the Orphanage, specifically the newly established Girl’s Orphanage, was undertaken “for our Lord Jesus’s sake.”⁵¹ He said a few years later that working for the Lord’s glory was a “grand motive” and that it never operates more properly than when caring for orphans.⁵² Spurgeon thus made it clear that the work of training children to know and fear the Lord would be pursued at the Orphanage for the glory of God alone.

⁴⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Preface,” *S&T* (1876): iii.

⁴⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “College and Orphanage,” *S&T* (March 1881): 133, italics his.

⁴⁹Spurgeon, “Annual Report for...1876-77,” 342; cf. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage...1878-79,” 3.

⁵⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “To Those Who Are Happily Married or Hope To Be So,” *S&T* (May 1880): 207.

⁵¹C. H. Spurgeon, “The Girls’ Orphanage, Stockwell,” *S&T* (June 1880): 282.

⁵²C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage, 1884-85,” *S&T* (August 1885): 450.

In the *Annual Report of 1882-83*, Spurgeon reminded the supporters of the Orphanage that he and the Trustees had pledged themselves to one another and to the public to endeavor to “make the Orphanage the means of relieving want” and “a place for training youth in the fear of the Lord.”⁵³ In the *Annual Report of 1884-85*, Spurgeon clearly stated that his primary desire for the Orphanage was that “each one of our children should become a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”⁵⁴ He asked his readership to pray daily for the salvation of the children at the Orphanage, and to pray that many of them would be raised up to become proclaimers of the gospel and missionaries to the nations.⁵⁵ And in the *Annual Report of 1885-86*, Spurgeon outlined once again the primary objective of the Orphanage: “The supreme desire of the Committee of Management is that the children shall be instructed in the truths of our common Christianity, renewed in spirit by the Holy Ghost, and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We are more concerned that the children should become disciples of Christ than devotees of a sect; and for this we will both pray and labour.”⁵⁶ He said in the same *Report* that the “moral and religious training of the children is a matter of primary concern.”⁵⁷

Spurgeon was thus not hesitant to use language of primacy when discussing “religious training” as one of the purposes of the Orphanage. The implication to be drawn from this collection of quotations is that there was no doubt in Spurgeon’s mind concerning the ultimate purpose of the Orphanage. That purpose was to glorify God by teaching children the gospel. His

⁵³C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage, 1882-83,” *S&T* (July 1883): 403.

⁵⁴Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the...Orphanage, 1884-85,” 451.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage, 1885-86,” *S&T* (August 1886): 454.

⁵⁷Ibid., 456.

commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation at the Orphanage is why this ministry should be considered word, rather than deed, oriented, and prioritistic rather than holistic.

e. Priority of Word Ministry at the Orphanage

Obviously, deed ministry was a necessary element of the work at the Orphanage, but this chapter argues that, although deed ministry and word ministry were partners at the Orphanage, word ministry was the priority. This section will offer some specific examples concerning how the priority of word ministry was carried out at the Orphanage.

i. Headmaster

The Headmaster of the Orphanage played a crucial role in determining the ethos of the institution. Hillyard made this clear when she said, “The choice of a competent master is a very important matter.”⁵⁸ In January of 1869, Spurgeon announced in the *S&T* that the Orphanage was looking for a Headmaster. Two months later, Spurgeon reported that a Mr. Vernon Charlesworth had accepted the post.⁵⁹ Charlesworth was serving as an associate pastor at Surrey Chapel before he took the job as Headmaster at the Orphanage. This is significant because it reveals that Charlesworth was committed to local church ministry and gospel proclamation before he took the job as Headmaster at the Orphanage. This commitment surely did not escape Spurgeon’s notice. In the *S&T* for August of 1874, Spurgeon said that Charlesworth was “a man who loves the children’s souls.”⁶⁰ Charlesworth was a perfect fit at the Orphanage because he had the same primary ambition as Spurgeon, namely, seeing children come to know Jesus.

⁵⁸*Autobiography*, 3:172.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 3:177.

⁶⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Stockwell Orphanage,” *S&T* (August 1874): 349.

ii. Weekly Routine

Spurgeon did not want to make religion a wearisome duty among the orphans. He knew that if the children were kept under a “cast-iron rule” they would grow up to be the “wildest and most irreligious of men.”⁶¹ He believed that when “religion is associated with all that is stern, gloomy, and repressive, it becomes distasteful, and is avoided as soon as the boy enters upon the liberty of manhood.”⁶² So, while the rules at the Orphanage were firm and any form of sin was addressed with a “strong hand,” the boys at the Orphanage enjoyed “a large measure of freedom, and fun, and frolic.”⁶³

The children were given time to play outside and enjoy time with their friends, but the weekly schedule at the Orphanage also contained numerous worship services. There were two services a day led by Charlesworth or one of his assistants, one in the morning before breakfast and one in the evening before dinner. Occasionally, Spurgeon or a Trustee would lead the service. The services were simple in form and always centered on the Word. A passage from the Bible would be read and expounded, hymns sung, and prayers offered. Then all of the children would recite a Scripture passage selected for the day. There were also Wednesday evening services for the older boys, when various ministers would come and deliver a Scriptural address. On Sunday morning, the older children attended services at the Tabernacle. Some of the other children were taken to a nearby Baptist chapel, while the remaining children went to a service that was conducted at the Orphanage. There was also a Sunday School on Sunday afternoon at the Orphanage, followed by an evening service. The *Annual Report of 1876-77* noted that the

⁶¹Ibid., 347-48.

⁶²Ibid., 348.

⁶³Ibid.

people who organized and led these various services throughout the week did so with “zeal to win the children to Christ.”⁶⁴ The daily services, Sunday services, and Sunday School all reveal the commitment that Spurgeon and the Orphanage leadership had to the priority of gospel proclamation at the Orphanage.

iii. Letters to Orphans

Spurgeon always made it a point to visit the children who were in the infirmary when he stopped by the Orphanage. A boy named Bray was there for an extended time, which allowed Spurgeon to build a relationship with him. Near the end of Bray’s life, Spurgeon wrote him a letter that illustrates Spurgeon’s commitment to keep Jesus first in all things – even in the suffering of little boys. In the letter, he told Bray that he hopes that he gets to feeling better, reminding him that “the Lord Jesus will be very near to you” and that Jesus “feels for dear suffering children.” He told Bray that Jesus “will keep you patient and joyful,” exclaiming, “Oh, how He loves!” Spurgeon loved reminding children about the love of Jesus, but he also loved taking care of their physical needs. At the end of the same letter, he told Bray, “If there is anything you want, be sure to let me know.”⁶⁵ Spurgeon was committed to Bray’s spiritual well-being, but not at the neglect of his physical needs.

In January of 1874, after he had received news about a death at the Orphanage, Spurgeon wrote a letter to the boys urging them to think about their eternal destinies. This letter illustrates Spurgeon’s unceasing commitment to the eternal well-being of the boys. He wrote:

Dear Boys, I have been much impressed by hearing that death has been to the Orphanage. I wonder who will be the next! Are you all prepared if he should shoot another arrow into one of the houses and lay another low? Dear boys, would you go to heaven if you were now at once to die? Wait a bit, and let each one answer for himself. You know you must

⁶⁴Spurgeon, “Annual Report for...1876-77,” 344; cf. idem, “Annual Report of...1882-83,” 408.

⁶⁵Murray, *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 110.

be born again, you must repent of sin, you must believe in Jesus. How is it with you? If you are not saved you are in great danger, fearful danger! Be warned, I pray you! I cannot bear to think of one boy going from the Orphanage to hell, that would be terrible indeed. But to rise to heaven, to be with Jesus forever! Why, this makes it worth while even to die a hundred deaths.⁶⁶

Spurgeon wrote these strong words because of his steadfast commitment to the boys' happiness in the "here and hereafter."⁶⁷ This letter demonstrates that, even in a time of grief, Spurgeon's chief concern for the boys at the Orphanage was their spiritual condition.

The happiest day of the year at the Orphanage was Christmas day. The children were served a tremendous meal, given small gifts, and best of all, visited by the President. Spurgeon cherished the many Christmases he spent at the Orphanage and regretted the many years he had to miss the festivities due to poor health. In the years that he was absent, he would always send a letter to the Orphanage that would be read aloud to the children. In 1879 he was ill and could not visit the children, so he wrote to them, saying:

Dear Boys, I wish you all a merry Christmas...I am very pleased to hear that as a rule you are a good lot of fellows, obedient, teachable, and true...I always wish everything to be done to make you love the Orphanage and feel it to be your home...We want you to be very jolly while you are with us, and then to grow up and go out into business, and to turn out first-rate men and true Christians.⁶⁸

Spurgeon's expectations for the children's future were made clear: he wanted them to grow up to be productive members of society and to be genuine followers of Christ. So even on Christmas day, Spurgeon told the children that becoming responsible adults and following Jesus were more important than anything else.

iv. Unofficial Visits

⁶⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (April 1874): 192-93.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 193.

⁶⁸C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (February 1880): 88-89.

Spurgeon would unofficially visit the Orphanage when he could. These visits were some of the most memorable times for the orphans. It was said that there was “no mistaking the ringing cheer which greeted his arrival,” as “everybody on the premises instantly knew what that shout meant,” passing around the message, “Mr. Spurgeon has come.”⁶⁹ Because of Spurgeon’s genuine care and concern for the children, they would flock toward him as soon as they saw him arrive. On one occasion, Spurgeon said that the children “compassed me about like bees!”⁷⁰ The younger and smaller children were always in danger of being trampled when Spurgeon would arrive and begin greeting the children. But “with ready tact and condescension,” Spurgeon would single out the smaller children and extend his hand to them.⁷¹ Spurgeon would take the time and make the effort to shake every child’s hand, and he would gladly talk to a child even if he was in the middle of an important conversation with one of the Trustees.⁷² Spurgeon gladly condescended from his high position to love and serve the children at the Orphanage because he was always aware of the fact that he served a Master who had gladly condescended from his high position in order to love and serve him.

Spurgeon once took a friend to visit the Orphanage on a Saturday afternoon. Upon arriving, they learned that there was a boy in the infirmary who was not likely to live much longer, so Spurgeon and his friend went to visit him. Robert Shindler, a close associate of Spurgeon’s, recounts the conversation between Spurgeon and the boy. Spurgeon told the boy, “Now, dear child, you are going to die...and soon you will be free from all pain, and you will be at rest.” Then he asked him, “Do you love Jesus?” The boy replied, “Yes.” Spurgeon said, “Jesus

⁶⁹*Autobiography*, 3:178.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 3:179.

⁷²*Ibid.*

loves you. He bought you with His precious blood, and He knows what is best for you...soon Jesus will take you home, and then He will tell you the reason, and you will be so glad.”

Spurgeon then laid his hand on the boy and prayed, “O Jesus, Master, this dear child is reaching out his thin hand to find Thine! Touch him, dear Saviour, with Thy living, warm clasp. Lift him as he passes the cold river, that his feet be not chilled by the water of death; take him home in Thine own good time. Comfort and cherish him till that good time comes. Show him Thyself as he lies here, and let him see Thee and know Thee more and more as his loving Saviour.”⁷³ This unplanned visit not only demonstrates Spurgeon’s compassion for those who are suffering, but also his evangelistic zeal. Even in this somber moment, Spurgeon boldly asked this boy about his relationship with Jesus, pointing him to the Savior in his hour of need.

On the afternoon of September 23, 1890, Spurgeon was walking around the Orphanage with an artist who was preparing some sketches for an upcoming book on the Institution.⁷⁴ Before long, they were caught in a downpour of rain and were forced to seek shelter in the boys’ gymnasium. The boys cheered when Spurgeon appeared, so he took a seat in the middle of them. The torrential rain and thunder was deafening, but Spurgeon decided to “turn the season to account,” that is, he decided to use the bad weather for a greater purpose. Spurgeon was always looking for opportunities to share the gospel, and this situation was no different. Instead of talking to the boys about school or sport, he began to engage them with the gospel. The thunder and lightning had a sobering effect on the boys, so Spurgeon began to tell them of “that freedom from fear which comes through faith in the Lord Jesus.” As it grew dark outside because of the storm, Spurgeon talked to them about the ground of a believer’s trust. He said that, because the

⁷³Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit*, 185-86.

⁷⁴The entire account that follows can be found in *Autobiography*, 4:326-29.

believer was cared for by his heavenly Father, he did not have to dread any condemnation or fear any evil. He continued, saying, “If we were at enmity against God, and had all our sins resting upon our guilty heads, we might be afraid to die...but, when reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, we [can say] farewell to fear.”

Although the storm was raging outside, making it hard for Spurgeon to be heard, he endeavored to “set forth the cross of Christ” and to “press home the question” concerning the boys’ love for Jesus. Spurgeon closed his time with the boys by telling them that everyone who worked at the Orphanage was committed to seeing all the children come to faith in Christ. He said, “The great desire of all who conduct the Orphanage is to lead you to take Jesus for your gracious Redeemer.” He encouraged the boys to love Jesus, but he knew that some of them might leave the Orphanage unsaved. He thus hoped that the boys would trust Jesus now so that they could leave the Orphanage “ready for the battle of life, and covered with a holy armour.”

These unplanned visits with the orphan boys illustrate Spurgeon’s primary commitment to the spiritual well-being of the children at the Orphanage. Every aspect of the Orphanage, and every turn of events at the Orphanage, was viewed as a means to the end of gospel proclamation. The Orphanage was certainly a deed ministry, but it was a deed ministry that functioned with word priority. The mission of the Orphanage was not just to take care of orphans; the primary mission of the Orphanage, as evidenced by the Headmaster, the weekly routine, Spurgeon’s letters to the children, and Spurgeon’s unplanned visits, was to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of Jesus.

f. Commitment to Meeting the Physical Needs of Children

As noted above, the Stockwell Orphanage was originally founded, in part, to address the educational needs of poor children in London. Spurgeon, however, also sought to address other

types of physical need that children had, needs such as clothing, food, and healthcare. Some estimate that, at this time, one-fifth of the population of London lived in slum conditions,⁷⁵ and that one-third of London's inhabitants were poor,⁷⁶ meaning that the physical needs of children in London were immense. But because their resources were limited, Spurgeon and the Trustees only considered the applications of families who evidenced the most need. "Every effort," he said, "is made to secure the benefits of the Orphanage to those who are most in need."⁷⁷ Spurgeon and the Trustees knew that they could not meet every need, so they had to be selective when deciding which cases to accept.

Spurgeon provides some examples of applicants' situations in the December 1873 issue of the *S&T*. A seven-year-old boy, one of seven children, had a mother who was unable to hold a job because her children required her constant care and attention. She had "struggled to keep her family respectable," working extremely hard to provide for her children, but her husband was an alcoholic. Her trials were severe while he was alive, but they became harder when he died.⁷⁸ Then there was the nine-year-old boy, whose father worked as a boilermaker, but was killed in an accident. The mother was left to care for nine children, with another one on the way. One of the children was blind and another was mentally ill. The mother was only able to earn three shillings a week by doing needlework. Spurgeon said that her prospects were "distressing."⁷⁹ There was a six-year-old boy, one of nine children, who lost his father. His mother could not

⁷⁵Shepherd, "Spurgeon's Children," 98.

⁷⁶William G. Travis, "Urban Pilgrims and Pioneers: Charles H. Spurgeon and the Poor," *Urban Mission* 10 (September 1992): 30.

⁷⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes Concerning the Stockwell Orphanage," *S&T* (December 1873): 554.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 557.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

handle the pressure of raising nine children alone and had to be placed in an asylum. She recovered enough to come back home and tried to provide for her children by running a little shop and doing needlework. Regarding this situation, Spurgeon said, “No case can be more deserving.”⁸⁰

Spurgeon and the Trustees were committed to assisting families, like these mentioned, with the greatest need. The *Annual Report of 1876-1877* said, “The greatest need has the loudest voice with [the Trustees].”⁸¹ Though Spurgeon and the Trustees did endeavor to help those with the greatest need, it will come as a surprise to modern readers that the Orphanage would not grant admittance to “unhealthy, deformed, [or] imbecile children” and that only “children born in wedlock can be received.”⁸² No exceptions were granted to these rules, as they had been established in the original trust of the Orphanage.

Though children with the greatest need were the ones accepted into the Orphanage, Shepherd rightly argues that the Orphanage should not be viewed as a rescue agency. Dr. Barnardo⁸³ was famous at that time for refusing to turn away any child that needed help. The children at Spurgeon’s Orphanage, however, did not come from the lowest strata of need. This is evidenced by the fact that the parents of the child had to be married and that an application had to be filled out. The Orphanage, according to Shepherd, was more of a preventative, rather than a rescue, agency. It provided a safe place for children who were at risk of entering a life of

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Spurgeon, “Annual Report for...1876-77,” 347.

⁸²C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage, 1880-81,” *S&T* (August 1881): 430.

⁸³Between 1870 and 1905, Thomas John Barnardo founded and directed over 90 homes and schools for poor and destitute children all across England and even in Canada. Travis, “Urban Pilgrims and Pioneers: Charles H. Spurgeon and the Poor,” 34. Spurgeon had a profound respect for Barnardo and his work, even allowing him to hold fundraising meetings at the Tabernacle. C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (January 1875): 44.

poverty, disease, and crime.⁸⁴ Though Spurgeon's Orphanage relieved significant physical needs in the greater London area, it would be wrong to conclude that the children it cared for were the worst cases in the city.⁸⁵

That Spurgeon not only succeeded, but also excelled in meeting the needs of children at the Orphanage is evident from the following report given by an official from the Local Government Board after his inspection of the Orphanage. He said:

In many important particulars this institution is well in advance of most kindred establishments which I have yet seen. The plan of feeding and clothing in particular is excellent, and the instruction of the class rooms is conducted with intelligence and life. The boys look healthy and happy, and I shall only be too glad if you succeeded in transplanting some of the advantages of this place to the pauper schools, in which they are much needed.⁸⁶

Spurgeon oversaw a first-rate Orphanage; one that was better managed and produced healthier and happier children than did the state-run institutions. This is because Spurgeon was committed to meeting the physical needs of children in London. It would be wrong to conclude, therefore, that Spurgeon's commitment to the conversion of children hindered his willingness to spare no expense in making sure that their physical needs were met.

⁸⁴Shepherd, "Spurgeon's Children," 93.

⁸⁵Ian Shaw and Peter Morden agree. Shaw says, "Children from very poor backgrounds tended to be under-represented [at the Orphanage], and children with a record of ill-health or delinquency were generally excluded." "Charles Spurgeon and the Stockwell Orphanage: A Forgotten Enterprise," *Christian Graduate* (September 1976): 73. And Morden says, "Spurgeon's vision for his Orphanage was a more 'respectable' one, arguably more in tune with the middle and lower-middle class Tabernacle membership and with the majority of his *Sword and Trowel* readers." "The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon: The Outworking of Communion, Active Exertion," *Baptistic Theologies* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 66.

⁸⁶F. J. Mouat, "Report of F. J. Mouat, Esq., M. D., of the Local Government Board," in C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (April 1877): 190.

g. Fruit of the Orphanage

At the time of Spurgeon's death in 1892, nearly sixteen hundred boys and girls had been cared for at the Orphanage.⁸⁷ Many of these children became followers of Jesus during their time at the Orphanage. As early as 1873, Spurgeon reported that "a gracious tone has been given" to the Orphanage, and that "many have come under impressions, and others have been converted to God."⁸⁸ Many years later, a girl who had spent seven and a half years at the Orphanage, wrote to Spurgeon to tell him of her salvation. She said that the Lord had found her and made her His child before she left the Orphanage. She told Spurgeon that, after her father died, she did not think that she would ever have "another equal to him," but after being at the Orphanage for a time, she "found a better and truer Father," one who would "never leave [her] nor forsake [her]."⁸⁹ She was clearly moved by the power of the gospel, saying, "It seems almost too good to be true that Jesus was really crucified to save me."⁹⁰ This is but one example of a child who was converted through the ministry of the Orphanage. A few years later, Spurgeon noted that several more children had been converted.⁹¹ The evangelistic emphasis of the Institution bore steady fruit through the years.⁹²

Some of the boys caught Spurgeon's passion for evangelism while they were at the

⁸⁷*Autobiography*, 4:324.

⁸⁸Spurgeon, "Notes Concerning the...Orphanage," (1873): 556.

⁸⁹*Autobiography*, 4:325.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work* (1876; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 113.

⁹²David Kingdon rightly points out that the number of conversions at the Orphanage was not large when compared with the total number of children in the Orphanage. But, he says, it is also likely that many of the children were converted after they left the Orphanage at age fourteen. "Spurgeon and His Social Concern," in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 105.

Orphanage. Before he passed away, a boy named Willie Young asked Mr. Charlesworth “to tell the boys to love God” and “to give their hearts to Jesus while [they were] young.”⁹³ Another boy, Thomas Page, finished his time at the Orphanage and began working with a man named Mr. Morton when he suddenly passed away. Mr. Morton wrote to inform Spurgeon of his passing and to tell him of the kind of young man he was. He wrote: “He [Thomas] died leaning on Jesus, leaving behind him a good name. I am very pleased to bear testimony to the fact that he was in every sense a good lad...His abilities would have procured him a good position in life...I have not merely lost a servant, but a friend.”⁹⁴ Spurgeon hoped that Mr. Morton’s testimony would encourage the supporters of the Orphanage, those who had “helped...[him] to train the orphans for Jesus.”⁹⁵ Thomas Page is but one example of the sort of young people the Orphanage sent out into the world: hard working and Jesus-loving.

In 1877, Spurgeon reported that several of the boys had gone out from the Orphanage and were serving in Sunday Schools and holding Evangelistic Services at Mission Stations around the city.⁹⁶ One boy went to New Zealand to fulfill an apprenticeship in the painting and sign-writing business, but while he was there he taught a Sunday School that was connected to a Wesleyan church. He wrote Spurgeon, thanking him for the spiritual impact that the Orphanage had on his life. He said, “I often think of the time when I was there...and feel grateful to God for the way he has led me, for it was owing to the religious instruction I got [at the Orphanage] that I was led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹⁷ This young man was saved at the Orphanage, and

⁹³C. H. Spurgeon, “Our Orphanage,” *S&T* (December 1874): 569.

⁹⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (1878): 318.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶Spurgeon, “Annual Report for...1876-77,” 345.

⁹⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (August 1881): 419.

as he entered adulthood, he was compelled to serve children by teaching them the Bible in a Sunday School in New Zealand. It did not take long, therefore, for Spurgeon's belief in the priority of word ministry to be embodied by some of the boys at the Orphanage.

Several of the boys from the Orphanage committed their lives to full-time Christian service. Some of these even attended the Pastor's College after their time at the Orphanage was completed. For example, R. S. Latimer, C. W. Townsend, and John Maynard entered the ministry after growing up in the Orphanage and being trained at the College. Maynard, who was converted at the Orphanage,⁹⁸ went "from the College to the Congo," where he gave his life on the mission field.⁹⁹ Another boy, T. H. Williams, also pursued studies with a view towards Christian ministry after he left the Orphanage. His mother wrote Spurgeon a letter thanking him for the spiritual direction that her son had received at the Orphanage. The letter said, in part, "The greatest comfort to my mind is that their spiritual welfare is so much thought of, for if there is one thing more than another that I claim for my children it is that they may be good and useful in the world and in the church."¹⁰⁰ Williams' mother was thankful that the Orphanage had focused on the spiritual condition of her boy.

The Orphanage thus produced several young men who committed their lives to Christian ministry and the proclamation of the gospel. The children who were helped, converted to Jesus, and called to ministry stand as lasting monuments to Spurgeon's commitment to meeting the spiritual and physical needs of children. W. Y. Fullerton, a close associate of Spurgeon's, agrees, saying that the Orphanage was "the greatest sermon Mr. Spurgeon ever preached."¹⁰¹ Those who

⁹⁸C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (March 1884): 147.

⁹⁹*Autobiography*, 3:178.

¹⁰⁰C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (October 1879): 495.

¹⁰¹Fullerton, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 204.

study Spurgeon do not always remember the work of the Orphanage, but Shepherd concludes that its mission produced results as “profound” as any of Spurgeon’s other ministries.¹⁰² These results are exemplified by the young men and women who came to know Jesus and who were given a passion to serve Jesus during their time at the Orphanage. This type of fruit could not have come from a barren tree, that is, a tree with no spiritual life. Thus, the spiritual focus of the Orphanage and its emphasis on gospel proclamation was used by God to produce fruit that remained.

h. Conclusion

Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrald compiled Spurgeon’s four-volume *Autobiography* in the years following his death in 1892. Toward the end of the fourth volume, they made it clear that Spurgeon (and Hillyard) had made the “spiritual welfare” of the children at the Orphanage their “principal aim.”¹⁰³ There was no doubt in their mind why Spurgeon had established the Orphanage. Though there was never any pressure put on the children to make a profession of faith in Jesus,¹⁰⁴ the children’s spiritual, not physical, needs were Spurgeon’s priority. The physical needs were met with the full force of Spurgeon’s generosity, but they were met with a view towards the children’s spiritual needs being met. The Orphanage is thus a good example of the approach to word and deed ministry that says that word and deed are partners in ministry, but word must take the priority. This approach could also be called benevolent prioritism.

¹⁰²Shepherd, “Spurgeon’s Children,” 100-01.

¹⁰³*Autobiography*, 4:325.

¹⁰⁴Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (1967; repr. Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty Press, 1996), 99.

It also seems, however, that Spurgeon viewed the Orphanage as a type of deed ministry that could serve as a bridge to word ministry. The following quotes from Spurgeon seem to indicate this. “There is something about orphan work,” he said in 1881, “which wins the sympathy of the most careless, and none can tell till the last great day how many have been by this means led to think well of the gospel, and next to hear it and experience its power.”¹⁰⁵ And in 1886, he said that working with orphans “is one of the best aids to the gospel.”¹⁰⁶ Spurgeon seems to be saying that the deed ministry of the Orphanage functioned as a bridge that was used by God to lead many people to hear and believe in the gospel. If this analysis of Spurgeon is correct, then word ministry still maintains the priority because the bridge (i.e., the Orphanage) is the means to an end, and therefore not the priority. What the bridge leads to (i.e., word ministry) is the priority.

There is no doubt that the deed ministry of the Orphanage adorned the word of the gospel, and in some cases led people to believe the gospel. But this adorning, or bridge-building, work was not the ultimate goal of the Orphanage, but was merely a means used by God to help people “think well of the gospel,” to “aid” the gospel, and to reveal the power of the gospel. The Orphanage was therefore a means to the end of gospel ministry. This view does not denigrate the legitimate social work that was done through the Orphanage, but merely says that gospel proclamation was primary and that meeting physical needs was secondary at the Orphanage.

Peter Morden seems to disagree with the word ministry as priority at the Orphanage view. He says, “Although the primary focus of [the Orphanage] was on social action, Spurgeon made sure that the boys (and later girls) had the opportunity to hear and respond to the

¹⁰⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “Preface,” *S&T* (1881): iv.

¹⁰⁶Spurgeon, “Annual Report of...1885-86,” 453.

gospel.”¹⁰⁷ He also says that Spurgeon’s evangelistic and social concerns came together in the work of the Orphanage, “in what can be described as an example of integral mission.”¹⁰⁸

Morden’s view notwithstanding, this chapter has brought forward an abundance of evidence from Spurgeon and Anne Hillyard that suggests that giving boys and girls an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel was the primary focus of the Orphanage, with the meeting of their physical needs taking a secondary position in order of importance.

One clarifying point is in order. The ordering of priorities at the Orphanage was not temporal. In other words, the physical needs of the children were addressed immediately upon their arrival at the Orphanage, so, in this sense, their physical needs had a temporal priority. But just because a child’s physical needs are met first does not mean that they are most important. Children should of course be fed, clothed, sheltered, and loved before they are presented with the gospel. The point of this chapter has been to show that Spurgeon did the former so that he could do the latter. He addressed the physical needs of the children with an ultimate view towards addressing their spiritual needs. Interestingly, Morden seems to support this conclusion when he says, “Although evangelism was paramount [for Spurgeon], social action was important too.”¹⁰⁹ Morden seems to concede that Spurgeon’s primary concern at the Orphanage was evangelism, or word ministry, not social action.

Spurgeon did not hesitate to say that the children’s spiritual needs were more important than their physical needs. Because of his commitment to the eternal welfare of children, he and his supporters devoted massive amounts of money to ensure that the children’s material needs

¹⁰⁷Morden, “The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon...Active Exertion,” 67.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 68.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 78.

were met, but the “principal aim” of the Orphanage was to lead children to know Jesus.¹¹⁰ The Orphanage was therefore word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational.

¹¹⁰*Autobiography*, 4:325.

Chapter 4

Priority of Gospel Proclamation in Spurgeon's Other Ministries

Now that the College and Orphanage have been discussed and demonstrated to be prioritistic in nature, this chapter will argue that word ministry was prioritized over deed ministry in several of Spurgeon's lesser-known ministries. Specifically, this chapter will argue that Spurgeon's church planting initiatives, international mission work, Colportage Society, evangelistic societies, and other miscellaneous ministries placed priority on word rather than deed ministry. This chapter will make it abundantly clear that the primary commitment of most of the other ministries associated with Spurgeon and the Metropolitan Tabernacle was the proclamation of the gospel and the conversion of the lost.

a. Church Planting

Spurgeon believed that the church should grow through multiplication, not addition. This belief created in him a lifelong passion for, and commitment to, church planting.¹ He sought to utilize the resources of his large congregation to extend the gospel through church planting to as many quarters of the greater London area as possible. In 1872, he said, "We have had too much of centralising; God means us to divide, and so to increase and conquer."² By "dividing" Spurgeon referred to the work of starting new churches, a work that he thought should focus on engaging areas of the city that were unengaged with the gospel. This section will argue that this

¹Michael Nichols agrees, saying, "Next to evangelism, Spurgeon's greatest passion was the planting of new churches." "Mission Yesterday and Today: Charles Haddon Spurgeon 1834-1892," *Baptist Review of Theology* 2 (March 1992): 38.

²C. H. Spurgeon, "Opening the Campaign," *The Sword and the Trowel* (October 1872): 439. These and all subsequent references to *The Sword and the Trowel* (hereafter *S&T*) come from an eight-volume reprinted edition of the magazine published by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, TX from 1975-2006.

work of multiplication through church planting was a result of Spurgeon's commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation.

i. Need for More Churches in London

There were two reasons why Spurgeon desired to plant churches in metropolitan London: the rapid growth of the city and the reality of perishing sinners. In an *S&T* article from April 1875, Spurgeon discussed the vastness of the ever-growing metropolis of London. The rapid growth of the city led Spurgeon to conclude that London "is not a city, but a province, nay a nation."³ He said that the new suburbs popping up around London should not be without a local church that could provide a consistent gospel witness. He chided dissenting churches for not being as proactive in church planting as their Anglican counterparts. He said, "The Anglican church builds its temples everywhere...They secure the people by being first on the ground," while "dissenters are slow, and find themselves too late."⁴ In October 1881, Spurgeon again challenged the readers of the *S&T* to consider thinking strategically about planting churches ahead of the population growth of London. He said, "As these thousands and thousands descend upon us, it would be a grand thing if we could have places of worship ready to welcome them."⁵ The explosive growth of London is the first reason why Spurgeon believed that more churches should be planted.

The second reason why Spurgeon wanted to see churches planted was because he believed that perishing sinners must have access to the gospel. He reminded Christians not to

³C. H. Spurgeon, "London: A Plea," *S&T* (April 1875): 145.

⁴*Ibid.*, 147.

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "London Advancing," *S&T* (October 1881): 500.

forget “the needs of dying souls.”⁶ When students from the College were unable to plant churches due to a lack of funds, Spurgeon asked the readers of the *S&T* this penetrating question: “Must we see men perish for lack of means to reach them with the gospel?”⁷ Planting churches, then, was not merely about keeping up with the population growth of London, but about getting the gospel to the lost.

Spurgeon was concerned that church planting, or the “chief agency for carrying the gospel into new regions,” had fallen “into almost total disuse” among churches in London.⁸ He argued that too many churches were negligent in their task of forming new churches, saying that “to a very large extent” the church leaves her “supreme vocation...to haphazard.”⁹ Negligence in taking the gospel to unreached areas through church planting did not, however, characterize Spurgeon and the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Because Spurgeon did not want students from the Pastor’s College to flood the existing churches of the city, he continually challenged them to establish new churches in areas where there were no Baptist churches. Nichols notes that, by 1878, Spurgeon and his students had been involved in the planting of forty-eight new churches in and around London.¹⁰ These encouraging numbers notwithstanding, Spurgeon was greatly concerned that the number of gospel-preaching churches was not keeping pace with the growth of London. The exponential growth of the city meant that “strenuous efforts” must be put forth or “London will become more and more

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 501.

⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Acta non Verba: Part 2,” *S&T* (February 1873): 51.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Nichols, “Mission Yesterday and Today,” 41.

heathen.”¹¹ This is why he told his friends and supporters that if they knew of districts in London that did not have a gospel-preaching church, they should let him know so that he could send a church planter there to establish one.

ii. Examples of Specific Church Planters

This section will mention three of the church plants that were initiated through Spurgeon’s ministry, illustrating the word-centered nature of each work.¹² In the December 1867 issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon reported that one of his evangelists, W. J. Orsman, had been successful in establishing a church in a “dark and hitherto neglected neighbourhood” of London.¹³ He points out that this area was only a few minutes’ walk from the Bank of England, but that it was “inhabited by many thousands of the poorest and most wretched of our great city – a large majority of whom appear as ignorant of the way of salvation as the benighted heathen in the backwoods of America or the wilds of Australia.”¹⁴ Spurgeon says that Orsman went into that area of the city, not to address poverty and other social evils, but to “carry the gospel into the hearts and homes” of those who lived there.¹⁵ Orsman’s priority as a church planter in one of the poorest neighborhoods of London was gospel proclamation, not social ministry.

¹¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (May 1881): 242. In a related statement, Spurgeon said in June 1885, “If the vast population all around this nation-city is not to relapse into utter heathenism, we must largely multiply the number of places of worship.” C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (June 1885): 293.

¹²In the *S&T* of May 1878, Spurgeon gave a brief description of forty-nine churches that were planted through the work of students from the Pastor’s College. See C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Paper Descriptive of The Lord’s Work Connected with the Pastors’ College: 1877-8,” *S&T* (May 1878): 240-62. Spurgeon was personally acquainted with the men who planted each of these churches, as he always kept a close watch on the ministries of his former students, regularly providing updates on many of these ministries in the *S&T*. For example, see C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Paper Concerning the Lord’s Work in Connection with the Pastors’ College: 1882-83,” *S&T* (May 1883): 267-71.

¹³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notices,” *S&T* (December 1867): 130.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

In October 1877, Spurgeon updated the readers of the *S&T* on the work of William Olney, Jr. and the Green Walk Mission in the poor district of Bermondsey.¹⁶ Spurgeon reported that Olney had been successful in gathering a team of people around him that was working together “to reach the ungodly” in Bermondsey.¹⁷ In an update on the work of the Green Walk Mission in 1884, Spurgeon said, “The spiritual work has come first, and the material structure has followed in due course.”¹⁸ The “spiritual work” of the Mission usually consisted of one person preaching the gospel in the street, while others sought to gather more people by singing gospel songs. Still others would distribute gospel tracts to those who were gathered to listen. Spurgeon asked the readers of the *S&T* if there were any others who would be willing to start similar works in other areas of the city. He said, “Young gentlemen of education and position could not better glorify God....than by consecrating themselves to evangelistic works in needy districts.”¹⁹ Spurgeon used the work of Olney and his team to encourage others to get involved in the work of proclaiming the gospel and reaching the lost of London. He told his readers, “The millions perish and few lay the matter to heart.”²⁰

In the November 1877 issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon reminded his readers of the work of Mr. Honour. Spurgeon and his supporters had aided Honour in establishing Olivet Chapel in a densely populated area south of the Thames known as Deptford. He told them that some property had been purchased in the community and a schoolroom had been constructed, and that the time had come for a chapel to be built for the congregation. The people there, however, were

¹⁶Bermondsey is a district in south London in the borough of Southwark.

¹⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (October 1877): 489.

¹⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “A Letter from Mr. Spurgeon,” *S&T* (January 1884): 35.

¹⁹Spurgeon, “Notes,” (October 1877): 489.

²⁰*Ibid.*

extremely poor and could not afford to build themselves a chapel. In a revealing statement, Spurgeon's commitment to the priority of evangelizing the poor, rather than meeting their physical needs, is made plain. He asked his readers, "Unless the rich help the poor, how can London be evangelized?"²¹ Spurgeon was asking his wealthier supporters to help Honour's congregation reach their impoverished community with the gospel, not meet their physical needs. These three examples of church planters sent out by Spurgeon illustrate the word-centered nature of his church-planting efforts.

Spurgeon said that the work of church planting must be pursued because "the people want the gospel," and that "in some localities they are pining for it."²² Churches needed to be planted all across London because, ultimately, people needed the gospel, not because people needed relief from physical suffering. The difficulty of church planting notwithstanding,²³ Spurgeon believed that this was the most efficient way to reach the unchurched and unsaved, which is why he worked tirelessly to raise funds and awareness for this work. Countless millions in nineteenth-century London were lost with no local church to bring the gospel to them, which is why Spurgeon desired "to see men saved" through the work of church planting.²⁴ He was committed to the priority of gospel proclamation through church planting, believing that "Not only London, but England and the world must have the gospel."²⁵

²¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (November 1877): 538.

²²Spurgeon, "London: A Plea," 147.

²³"The difficulty of founding churches...can only be known by those who have experienced it." Spurgeon, "Annual Paper...1877-8," 238.

²⁴Spurgeon, "London: A Plea," 147-48.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 148.

b. International Missions

As mentioned above, Spurgeon preferred that the students from the College start new churches rather than serve in existing ones. This preference had no geographic limits, as Spurgeon was committed to the work of starting new churches where none existed. “The breadth of this work,” says Michael Nicholls, “was the world.”²⁶ Spurgeon’s heart beat for the glory of God through the spread of the gospel among the nations. He longed to send people overseas who would be committed to the proclamation of the gospel because he was convinced that the gospel was what the nations needed most.

i. Spurgeon the Sender

Spurgeon was eager to see students at the College receive a call to international missions. In 1871, he reported that only one or two had received such a call, but he continued to pray that the Lord would “separate some of our number to work among the heathen.”²⁷ By 1873, the Lord began answering Spurgeon’s prayer, as, of the 330 men who had studied at the College at that time, two had gone to serve in India, one to China, two to Spain, one to Brazil, one to South Africa, six to Australia, twenty three to the United States, and ten to Canada.²⁸

During a Monday evening prayer meeting in December 1873, one man from the Tabernacle and one man from the College were commissioned for missionary service in India. Concerning the commissioning of these two men, Spurgeon said that his heart was “very glad” because he had long prayed “for missionaries to spring from the church and college, and now the

²⁶Michael Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2: The Principles and Practice of the Pastors’ College,” *Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (April 1987): 89.

²⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “The Ministry Needed by the Churches, and Measures for Providing it,” *S&T* (1871): 228.

²⁸Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2,” 89.

beginning of the answer is come.”²⁹ In January 1875, Spurgeon reported that another student from the College, Mr. Miller, was leaving to be a missionary in India. Concerning Miller’s departure, Spurgeon said, “We are more glad of this than tongue can tell, for we count it the highest honour the College can have, to send out missionaries to heathen lands.”³⁰ In October 1875, four more Tabernacle members were commissioned and sent out to serve as international missionaries. Two ladies were going to India, one gentleman to Turk’s Island, and another gentleman to China. Spurgeon said that sending out “four at a time is hopeful,” but, he asked, “When shall we see the young warriors go forth by forties for the Lord Jesus?”³¹

In September 1877, Spurgeon said that several men were ready and waiting to go, but the Missionary Society lacked funds to send them. “There is a missionary spirit in the College,” he said, “but work among the heathen...is expensive.”³² He thus sought access to the “deep, unconsecrated purses which swing at the sides of many professed Christians, while the heathen are perishing.”³³ When funds did not come in to support the missionaries from the College or the Tabernacle, Spurgeon referred them to other mission sending agencies. Despite this almost constant lack of funds, Spurgeon rejoiced in 1883 that the “missionary spirit” still pervaded the College, and he hoped that missionaries would be sent to every corner of the globe in order to preach “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” and lead “multitudes to the Saviour’s feet.”³⁴

²⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (January 1874): 43.

³⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (January 1875): 44.

³¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1875): 546. Some scholars estimate that, by 1916, almost a quarter of all the students who had passed through the College since 1856 were serving overseas. Michael J. Quicke and Ian M. Randall, “Spurgeon’s College,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (June 1999): 123.

³²C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (September 1877): 443.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (December 1883): 653.

Spurgeon wanted to send men and women to the nations in order that they might proclaim the gospel and lead people to Jesus.

ii. Examples of Specific Missionaries

N. Hardingham Patrick and Dr. T. Gillard Churcher, two of the first students to be sponsored by the Pastor's College Missionary Association, were sent to Morocco to preach the gospel and do medical mission work. Before they embarked on their journey, Spurgeon wrote to Patrick, rejoicing that the Lord had made a way for him to go to North Africa. He knew that Morocco was a land of great need, but he reminded Patrick that "the Gospel will meet the need of any creature in the form of man," which is why he should "keep wholly and only to the cross," as the cross was "the hope of those to whom [they] go."³⁵ Spurgeon makes it clear to this young missionary that, though people in Morocco need many things, their greatest need is the gospel.³⁶ This is why the gospel message, the message of the cross, must be the priority of their mission.

W. J. White also exemplifies this commitment to the priority of word ministry. Before becoming a student at the Pastor's College, White served as an English teacher in Japan for five years (1871-1876). During this time, he decided to study medicine in order to devote himself to medical mission work. After he began his medical studies, he received a letter from Dr. Palm, a medical missionary in Nugata, Japan. The letter said, in part, "If I had had more faith in the power of the simple preached word I should not have become a medical missionary."³⁷ After

³⁵Iain H. Murray, *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 72.

³⁶In writing to Spurgeon in March 1891, Churcher acknowledged the great need that existed in Morocco. He said that, after five years of service there, he had come to believe that "the one thing special about this land is its need, its *awful* need of the gospel...For there are hundreds of thousands, yes, millions in this land alone, who have never heard of Jesus as the only Saviour, nor even seen a real Christian." Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 159-60, italics his.

³⁷Spurgeon, "Notes," (October 1877): 487.

reading the letter, White said, “At once I saw my mistake; I saw that it was by the foolishness of preaching that sinners should be led to the Saviour.”³⁸

White subsequently decided to devote himself to preaching the gospel rather than medical missions, to word ministry instead of deed ministry. He transitioned back to England to study theology at Spurgeon’s College in order that he might be better equipped to preach the gospel to the people of Japan. He felt that he was “in debt to the Japanese,” and that the debt would remain on him until he had “faithfully preached to them the gospel of Christ.”³⁹ White is a prime example of someone who, because of his newfound commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, was willing to abandon deed ministry in favor of word ministry. Though it is true that he made this decision to change the direction of his ministry before he ever came into contact with Spurgeon, it is nonetheless interesting that, once he decided to pursue a life of proclaiming the gospel among the Japanese, he immediately turned to Spurgeon and his College for the help and training he needed to fulfill God’s new calling on his life.⁴⁰

After completing his training at the College, White commenced his preaching ministry in Japan. In September 1879, Spurgeon reported that White had opened a “preaching station” in Japan, and that “as soon as it is filled the movable front is removed, and the people in the street hear the preacher’s message.”⁴¹ White also had received the good news that a thousand people in one of the inland provinces of Japan were seeking baptism.⁴² White’s commitment to the priority

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 487-88.

⁴⁰In the November 1877 issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon made sure his readers understood that he was not opposed to medical missions. He said that medical missions are important and should not be despised because “in some cases [they are] a most suitable agency,” but that he still believed most “in the man who gives himself wholly to the ministry of the gospel.” Spurgeon, “Notes,” (November 1877): 538.

⁴¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (September 1879): 446.

of gospel proclamation was therefore bearing much fruit among the Japanese people.

Spurgeon's College and the Tabernacle also sent out Mr. Johnson and Mr. Richardson – both native Africans, with their wives, to the Bakundu region of Cameroon, West Africa. They began preaching the gospel as soon as they were settled in Cameroon, using a translator at first, but eventually preaching in the people's native language. Spurgeon reported that the missionaries had been warmly received and that the natives “ask them many questions about the gospel they bring.”⁴³ The missionaries wasted no time in learning the native language in order that they might preach the gospel. There were, of course, countless physical needs to be addressed in Cameroon, and the missionaries and their wives did establish a school for boys that met during the week, but Johnson and Richardson's primary objective was to proclaim the gospel and teach people the truths of God's word in their native language.

In the *Annual Report Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with the Pastors' College, 1884-85*, Spurgeon provides an overview of the work of dozens of former College students who were serving on the international mission field. Several students were serving in China with the China Inland Mission. Spurgeon mentions J. J. Turner who spent seven years in the interior of China, laboring during a period of great famine. Spurgeon said that Turner “assisted in the distribution of food to many starving Chinese” while also taking them “the message of divine love.”⁴⁴ Turner thus embodied Spurgeon's commitment to keeping word and deed ministry in a close partnership.⁴⁵

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (August 1879): 396.

⁴⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Annual Report Concerning the Lord's Work in Connection with the Pastors' College, 1884-85,” *S&T* (June 1885): 317.

⁴⁵This commitment of Spurgeon's will be further discussed in chapter 7.

Spurgeon also reported that S. B. Drake was still ministering in China, continuing to “labour in the midst of millions who have never even heard of the true God and eternal life.”⁴⁶ Drake had committed the past seven years of his life to taking the gospel to those who had never heard, a commitment that Spurgeon gladly embraced and praised. He also reported on a medical missionary to China named E. H. Edwards, who was, like Jesus, healing the multitudes of their various diseases and leading people to put their faith in Jesus.⁴⁷ *The Annual Report...1884-85* contains many more accounts of men who were faithfully proclaiming the gospel in places like Japan, India, West Africa, Central Africa, South Africa, the Bahamas, Haiti, Jamaica, Brazil, Spain, and Italy.⁴⁸ In the October 1886 issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon rejoiced in the evangelistic work being done in Bulgaria and reported that one of his books on baptism was “working powerfully” in Romania and Turkey.⁴⁹ Spurgeon’s influence on missionaries thus extended to every continent and most of the known countries in the world at that time.

These are only a few of the countless examples of men who were sent out by Spurgeon to do international mission work. Commenting on a young man who had safely arrived and commenced his ministry in New Zealand, Spurgeon said, “Thus does the Lord call forth our young brethren to all parts of the world, and our heart is glad, because we know that wherever they go they will preach Christ crucified.”⁵⁰ The men whom Spurgeon sent to the ends of the earth always went with one ambition: to proclaim the gospel. This ambition is the result of the priority of word ministry as a non-negotiable element of Spurgeon’s missiology, a priority that

⁴⁶Spurgeon, “Annual Report Concerning...the Pastors’ College, 1884-85,” (June 1885): 317.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 318-34.

⁴⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (October 1886): 553.

⁵⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (October 1879): 493.

was gladly embraced and appropriated by the missionaries he raised up and sent out.

iii. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission

Spurgeon enjoyed a long and fruitful partnership with Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission. Spurgeon frequently sought to raise support and awareness for Taylor and his ministry through the *S&T*. In 1869, he said, “No mission now existing has so fully our confidence and good wishes as the work of Mr. Hudson Taylor in China.”⁵¹ As early as 1865, Spurgeon devoted an entire article in the *S&T* to a young man who was joining Taylor in his work of preaching “the glorious gospel of Christ in China.”⁵² And in an article on “Missionary Work in China” in 1867, Spurgeon reported that the gospel was making significant inroads in China through Taylor’s ministry. He challenged his readers to consider serving with the China Inland Mission, asking, “Are there no others whose hearts the Lord has touched with a similar desire to win the Chinese for our Saviour God?”⁵³ In February 1875, Spurgeon published a letter in the *S&T* in which Taylor makes an appeal for Christians to pray for the Lord to send missionaries to China and that many young men would be willing to “gladly live, labour, suffer, and, if need be, die for Christ’s sake.”⁵⁴ Taylor said that there are many such men “*in the churches of the United Kingdom,*” and that he hoped that the Lord would “*thrust many of them out.*”⁵⁵

⁵¹C. H. Spurgeon, “The Apostolic Work in China,” *S&T* (January 1869): 32; cf. idem., “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1878): 558.

⁵²C. H. Spurgeon, “A Lesson in Missionary Enterprise,” *S&T* (May 1865): 220.

⁵³C. H. Spurgeon, “Missionary Work in China,” *S&T* (1867): 180.

⁵⁴J. Hudson Taylor, “Appeal for Prayer on Behalf of More than One Hundred and Fifty Millions of Chinese,” in C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (February 1875): 92.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, italics his.

One reason why Spurgeon supported Taylor's ministry so vigorously was because of the evident gospel fruit that it was producing. This is illustrated by the fact that, whenever Taylor was in England, he was invited to the Monday evening prayer meetings at the Tabernacle so that he could bring men and women who had committed to serve with the China Inland Mission and present them to Spurgeon and his congregation for prayer and encouragement.⁵⁶ Spurgeon was always encouraged in these meetings to hear that "the Holy Spirit [was] applying the gospel to Chinese hearts" through the ministry of the China Inland Mission.⁵⁷

However, Spurgeon especially loved Taylor's ministry because Taylor was committed to the priority of proclaiming the gospel to those who had never heard.⁵⁸ Taylor's all-consuming vision was to mobilize the church to send missionaries to places "where there are millions of people without a single witness for Christ."⁵⁹ Spurgeon's long and fruitful partnership with Taylor was the result of both men's belief that inherent to the task of missions was a commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation to those who had never heard.

iv. Priority of Gospel Proclamation in International Missions

Even while still a teenager, Spurgeon thought that, if he were to become a missionary, his primary objective should be preaching the gospel. In a letter to his uncle in 1853, he wrote, "I often wish I were in China, Hindostan, or Africa, so that I might preach, preach, preach all day

⁵⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (December 1875): 568; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (February 1876): 88; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (April 1876): 187; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (November 1878): 558; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (March 1879): 147; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (April 1884): 197; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (October 1884): 559.

⁵⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (June 1878): 315.

⁵⁸In the article "Appeal for Prayer on Behalf of More than One Hundred and Fifty Millions of Chinese," Taylor argues for the necessity of reaching the remaining nine unreached provinces of China. So, interestingly, long before the modern distinction of "people group" and the modern focus on reaching unreached peoples, Taylor seemed to be advocating a similar approach to missions. Spurgeon, "Notes," (February 1875): 92.

⁵⁹Spurgeon, "Notes," (November 1878): 558.

long.”⁶⁰ Spurgeon’s desire, even as a young man, was not to cure the physical ills of the nations, but to address their spiritual malady through the preaching of the gospel. He knew that missionary work was dangerous and often led to death, but he believed that “it would be sweet to die preaching.”⁶¹

Spurgeon’s conviction that preaching the gospel was inherent to mission work stayed with him throughout his ministry. This is why he encouraged potential missionary candidates to consult their pastors before applying for work in another country. He thought that a candidate for missionary work should first “prove [their] qualifications at home.”⁶² The way one proved themselves to be a good missionary candidate, according to Spurgeon, was by “beginning to preach in [the] Street or somewhere.”⁶³ Preaching (i.e. gospel proclamation) was thus the litmus test Spurgeon used to test a missionary’s qualifications for service. This is because he believed that missions were synonymous with gospel proclamation. For Spurgeon, preaching was inherent to the task of missions.

On August 10, 1861, the centenary of William Carey’s birth was celebrated at the Tabernacle. Spurgeon was one of several men who delivered addresses that night. In his speech, he talked about Carey being an example of innovation for the cause of Christ in his generation, saying that Carey’s great innovation was his desire to take the gospel to the heathen. After the service, several young men came to talk to Spurgeon about being missionaries. Spurgeon believed that most of these young men were genuinely called to ministry, but if the opportunity

⁶⁰G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3 vols. (1894; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 1:85.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Murray, *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 79.

⁶³Ibid.

to serve in a foreign land never opened, he encouraged them to engage in winning souls in their current locale. However, even though evangelistic work in England was good and necessary, Spurgeon would “never be happy...till many from [his] church had been sent to preach in other lands.”⁶⁴ Notice that it is preaching that Spurgeon is anxious for missionaries to do in other lands, not preaching and social ministry, and not merely social ministry.

At a Monday evening prayer meeting on July 30, 1866, Spurgeon presented several missionaries who were about to depart for India. In his address that evening, he lamented the fact that so many missionaries were forsaking the task of preaching, and reminded his people that preaching must be the central occupation of missionaries. He said:

There is a feeling growing up in many churches...that there is less preaching by missionaries than in former times. Translations, writing tracts, and teaching knowledge are, I consider, subordinate things to preaching the Gospel...I am accustomed to say to the students of the College, “If you cannot preach, you can do nothing.” I venture to say that because missionaries are apt to forget it.⁶⁵

Spurgeon thus believed that all other types of ministry that a missionary may be engaged in were “subordinate” to the proclamation of the gospel. He made statements like this because he was committed to the priority of gospel proclamation.

Spurgeon was aware of the dangers of his prioritistic approach to missions. He realized that preaching the gospel of Christ in the dark and unreached areas of the world would cost many missionaries their lives. Commenting on those who died taking the gospel to Africa, he said, “To us it seems a sad waste of human life that man after man should go to a malarious region, and perish in the attempt to save the heathen,” but it must be that “by heroic sacrifice the foundations of the African church should be laid.”⁶⁶ Spurgeon believed that only through the sacrifice of

⁶⁴Pike, *Life and Work*, 2:383.

⁶⁵Pike, *Life and Work*, 3:178.

faithful men who preached the gospel would the church of God be established in foreign lands.

Because Spurgeon was committed to the proclamation of the gospel and the salvation of those who had never heard, he never wavered in his appeals for more money to be given and for more people to go. He was convinced that the lostness of the nations could only be met by courageous missionaries who were willing to lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel, a willingness that would come as a result of a missionaries' commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation.

c. Colportage⁶⁷ Society

The same article from the *S&T* that compelled Anne Hillyard to give £20,000 towards the formation of a home for fatherless boys also compelled Mr. E. Boustead, a member of the Tabernacle, to give generously towards the establishment of the Colportage Society.⁶⁸ The article, "The Holy War of the Present Hour," was Spurgeon's attempt to unveil the "disguised Romanism" that was rapidly sweeping across England.⁶⁹ In the article, Spurgeon was specifically referring to Puseyism, or the Anglican Church's attempt to adopt certain Roman Catholic practices and theological principles. He reminded his readers what he had done to combat this dangerous movement through the training of preachers at the Pastor's College, but he also urged them to consider distributing literature that would expose the errors of the movement. In a comment that would be instrumental in the creation of the Colportage Society, Spurgeon said:

If several millions of copies of forcible, Scriptural testimonies could be scattered over the

⁶⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 241-42.

⁶⁷"Colporteur" is a French word used to describe someone who sells books and other literature.

⁶⁸*C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 3 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), 162.

⁶⁹C. H. Spurgeon, "The Holy War of the Present Hour," *S&T* (August 1866): 339-45.

land, the results might far exceed all expectation... We would like to see the country flooded, and even the walls placarded, with bold exposures of error and plain expositions of truth... No greater plague can break forth among our people than the plague of Puseyism. If there be any human means unused, by which the flood of Popery may be stemmed, let us use it.⁷⁰

After Boustead read this article, he was moved to contact Spurgeon about the formation of a Colportage Society. Boustead was acquainted with the work of the Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland, and, wanting to see a similar work started in England, he provided a generous donation toward its initiation. After receiving this donation by Boustead, Spurgeon gathered a group of friends in order to consider forming an Association that would “extend the circulation of the Scriptures” and “increase the diffusion of sound religious literature, in order to counteract the evils arising from the perusal of works of a decided Romish tendency.”⁷¹ His meetings with these men led Spurgeon to request that eight men form themselves into a committee that would immediately begin the process of outlining rules and regulations needed to support a Colportage Society. This committee appointed their first colporteur on November 1, 1866, and within two months there were three colporteurs at work. It was another year before three more men were commissioned in the work, but between the years of 1873 and 1878, the Society experienced exponential growth. By 1878, ninety-four colporteurs had been appointed, and during the year of 1878, the colporteurs made 926,290 visits to individuals and families all across England.

Mr. Boustead was the largest financial contributor to the work of the Colportage Society, leaving a large amount of money to the Society when he died. Spurgeon also gave liberally to the Society, and always advocated its usefulness through his preaching and writing ministry. He

⁷⁰*Autobiography*, 3:161-62.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 3:162.

could not understand why more people did not see the importance of this work. He thought that this Society was “one of the most efficient and economical agencies in existence” because the colporteur does more than just sell books.⁷² The colporteur goes door-to-door conversing with people about their souls, praying with the sick, and leaving gospel tracts with individuals and families. He holds prayer meetings and preaches in the open air. “He is,” Spurgeon said, “at first a missionary, then a preacher, and by-and-by in the truest sense a pastor.”⁷³

Spurgeon consistently reminded his friends and supporters that the primary aim of the Colportage Society was “to be an aggressive evangelistic agency.”⁷⁴ He said that experience proved that this Society was “second to none” when it came to the great work of pressing home the gospel to “the multitudes who neglect God and never enter a place of worship.”⁷⁵ This evangelistic work was primarily carried out by selling copies of the Bible, evangelical periodicals, and “by the direct personal appeals of the colporteurs.”⁷⁶ Spurgeon believed that, because of the evangelistic vision of this Society, their labors were “owned of God to the salvation of souls.”⁷⁷ In fact, Spurgeon only wanted men who had “an earnest desire for the salvation of souls” to apply for the work.⁷⁸ Hiring this kind of man naturally led to the conversion of many souls through this ministry. In the *S&T*, Spurgeon often reported that the colporteurs were instrumental in “numerous cases of conversion” among those whom they

⁷²Ibid., 3:164.

⁷³Ibid. Cf. C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (June 1874): 289.

⁷⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1880): 193.

⁷⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “Metropolitan Tabernacle Colportage Association: The Seventeenth Annual Report, 1883,” *S&T* (July 1884): 390.

⁷⁶Spurgeon, “Notes,” (April 1880): 193.

⁷⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (October 1876): 482.

⁷⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (February 1877): 91.

visited.⁷⁹ The fruit of their ministry was due to their commitment to travel door-to-door, day after day, in the towns and villages of England, “sowing the seed of God’s word, by the printed page, by the pointed appeal, and by the daily life.”⁸⁰ It is no wonder, then, that a ministry that was dedicated to sowing the seed of the word produced much fruit.

At their annual meetings in May, Spurgeon would listen to the colporteur’s testimonies of people being converted to Christ through the literature that they sold. Spurgeon records an example of one such story of someone led to Christ by a colporteur in his *Autobiography*:

Describing a poor fallen woman, who had been brought to a sense of her sinfulness in the sight of God, and who was afterwards in a despairing condition, the brother (i.e. the colporteur) said: “I drew her attention to many of the promises and invitations of the gospel, sold her Mr. Spurgeon’s sermon on ‘The Gentleness of Jesus,’ and asked the Lord to bless the reading of it to her soul. If I could find language sufficiently expressive, I would describe my visit to her on the following day. Holding the sermon (No. 1,147) in her hand, her voice tremulous with emotion, and her face radiant with happiness, she read upon page 703 the following words: ‘Hearts are won to Jesus by the silent conviction which irresistibly subdues the conscience to a sense of guilt, and by the love which is displayed in the Redeemer’s becoming the great substitutionary sacrifice for us, that our sins might be removed. In this way, conversions are wrought; not by displays of human zeal, wisdom or force: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”’ Then, still holding the sermon in her hand, she said to me, ‘Blessed be the Lord for ever, I have found Him; or, rather, He has found me! I am saved, pardoned, forgiven, accepted, and blessed, for Christ’s sake.’”⁸¹

This testimony is but one example of the evangelistic success of the Colportage Society.

Another colporteur, writing in his quarterly report in 1883, said that he would rather be a colporteur than anything else in the world because of “the blessed privileges and opportunities [he] has of dealing with people about their souls and salvation.”⁸² These and many other personal

⁷⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1877): 190; cf. idem., “Notes,” *S&T* (March 1880): 142; idem., “Notes,” *S&T* (September 1880): 489; idem., “Metropolitan Tabernacle Colportage Association...1883,” 392-99.

⁸⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1878): 190.

⁸¹*Autobiography*, 3:164-65.

⁸²C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (February 1883): 98.

testimonies given by the colporteurs make it clear that the priority of their ministry was the proclamation of the gospel and the salvation of the lost.

The Colportage Societies' commitment to the proclamation of the gospel yielded tremendous fruit. By Spurgeon's death in 1892, the Society employed ninety-six agents, and in the twenty-five years of ministry from the Society's inception in 1866 to 1891, 11,822,637 visits to families were recorded.⁸³ During each visit the gospel was proclaimed by the colporteur with the intention of leading individuals to place their faith in Jesus Christ. "The object of the colporteur," Spurgeon said, was to "above all, lead sinners to the Saviour."⁸⁴ So whether it was through the spoken or printed word, the primary objective of the Colportage Society was to proclaim the gospel and lead people to trust in Jesus.

d. Evangelistic Societies

This section will provide an overview of the following three evangelistic societies connected to Spurgeon's ministry: the Pastor's College Society of Evangelists, the Tabernacle Society of Evangelists, and the Baptist Country Mission. The difference between the Pastor's College Society and the Tabernacle Society was that the Tabernacle Society consisted of laymen, whereas the College Society was made up of men who had trained (or were training) for vocational ministry at the Pastor's College.⁸⁵ This section will argue that all three of these Societies were committed to the priority of gospel proclamation.

⁸³C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 4 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), 336.

⁸⁴Spurgeon, "Notes," (October 1884): 561.

⁸⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1878): 364.

i. Pastor's College Society of Evangelists

The students at the Pastor's College were known throughout England for their commitment to evangelical doctrine and for their "evangelistic fervour."⁸⁶ During the course of their studies, many of the students came to Spurgeon and offered themselves for the ministry of evangelism. Mr. W. Higgins was the first such student, followed by Mr. A. J. Clarke and Mr. J. Manton Smith. These latter two men commenced their ministry by holding a series of evangelistic meetings at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in August 1877. Smith used his talents as a trumpet player to attract crowds that would then hear Clarke preach the gospel.⁸⁷ Smith was more than a trumpet player, however, as Spurgeon said that both he and Clarke knew how to present the gospel to their audiences in compelling and persuasive ways. Spurgeon was sure that these men would "make a stir" and that "by God's blessing souls will be gathered in."⁸⁸ It is clear, then, that at the outset of Smith and Clarke's evangelistic ministry, Spurgeon desired to see these men lead people to Jesus by preaching the gospel, not to merely attract crowds. For him, the latter was always the means to the former.

After Clarke's health forced him to resign the work, Mr. W. Y. Fullerton took his place, forming the partnership known as "C. H. Spurgeon's evangelists, Fullerton and Smith" – a

⁸⁶*Autobiography*, 4:334.

⁸⁷Spurgeon noted that Smith's silver trumpet was "very useful in attracting people from the street." "Notes," (September 1877): 440. It could be argued that Spurgeon was not inherently opposed to attractional ministry or using various means to "attract" a crowd in order to preach the gospel to them. However, Spurgeon was cautious concerning the use of music for such purposes. In July 1878, he noted that some churches have services where "the attraction is mere music." Spurgeon responded to this type of attractional ministry, saying, "Is this the mission of the church of Christ? Is this the fitting use of the precious talent of song? Surely the winning of hearts for Jesus is our work, and not the provision of amusement. Singing can be made pleasantly subservient to our grand aim, and most happy and attractive gatherings may be held without going into secular sing-song, and unprofitable entertainment. It is a good thing...to bring [our young people] under the influence of the gospel by addresses and singing, of which the old, old gospel is the theme. This will have all the charms of music without the drawbacks which inevitably attend concerts..." "Notes," (July 1878): 364-65.

⁸⁸Spurgeon, "Notes," (September 1877): 440.

partnership that would become familiar in thousands of households across the United Kingdom.⁸⁹ Fullerton and Smith traveled extensively, preaching the gospel through word and song and seeing fruit wherever they went. Spurgeon provided details of their ministry in almost every issue of the *S&T*. For example, in January 1880 he reported that their evangelistic campaign in Scarborough⁹⁰ was so successful that they were asked to remain an extra week.⁹¹ People had to be turned away from the meetings each evening and as many as seven hundred people attended the noon prayer meetings. Some two hundred people were invited to tea because they were believed “to have been brought to a knowledge of the truth through the instrumentality of the evangelists.”⁹² When Fullerton and Smith left Scarborough, they left the churches with much work to do in “gathering up the fruit of their labours,” as “the old gospel [won] its way victoriously.”⁹³ Their work in Scarborough is but one example of the fruit that Fullerton and Smith’s evangelistic ministry produced.⁹⁴ Because these men had been “trained in Mr. Spurgeon’s school,” they centered their ministry on the proclamation of the gospel and, under God’s grace, had great success all across the United Kingdom as a result.⁹⁵

⁸⁹*Autobiography*, 4:335.

⁹⁰Scarborough is a town on the coast of the North Sea in far northeast England.

⁹¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (January 1880): 43.

⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴In the May 1883 issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon told his readers, “It is quite impossible to tell how many souls have been won for Christ through the preaching and singing of [Fullerton and Smith]; but in every place where they have gone large numbers have professed to find the Saviour, and many believers have been stimulated to fuller consecration and more earnest labour for the Lord.” Spurgeon, “Annual Paper...1882-83,” (May 1883): 274-75.

⁹⁵Spurgeon, “Notes,” (January 1880): 44.

ii. Tabernacle Evangelistic Society⁹⁶

The Tabernacle Evangelistic Society had much in common with the Pastor's College Society of Evangelists. The men in the Tabernacle Evangelistic Society also held services that proclaimed the gospel through music and they held special evangelistic services at any church that would have them. But this Society would also preach the gospel in the streets⁹⁷ and distribute gospel literature. In July 1881, Spurgeon reported that this Society was conducting an average of forty services each Sunday, thirty on weeknights, resulting in approximately 3,650 meetings being conducted in a year. Each service was held, Spurgeon said, "with the direct object of evangelizing some part of London."⁹⁸

Spurgeon said that this Society had no intention of starting new churches by enticing people away from existing ones. Rather, the aim of these men was to work alongside pastors and ministers of existing churches in order to help them reach their communities with the gospel.⁹⁹ In a letter to Spurgeon, the secretary of the Tabernacle Evangelistic Society, Mr. G. E. Elvin, said that the aim of the services conducted by his evangelists was "awakening the unconcerned, and leading the anxious ones to the Saviour."¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon told the readers of the *S&T* that the

⁹⁶Also known as the Tabernacle Evangelists' Association.

⁹⁷One of Spurgeon's favorite methods of evangelism was open air preaching. He encouraged the evangelists in this Society to take up this form of ministry as a way of reaching "the outside non-hearing masses." C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1874): 341. He encouraged ministers to use this method of evangelism to get the gospel to those who would not come to a church building to hear it. He said, "No minister should keep within the walls of a building when he can preach the gospel upon the beautiful green sward (i.e., field of grass) with the blue heavens above him. Brethren, come out of your dens and corners, and make the gospel to be heard by those who are ignorant of it. Fishermen do not wait for the fish to swim to them, but they go after them. Turn out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." *Ibid.*

⁹⁸C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1881): 353.

⁹⁹Spurgeon, "Notes," (October 1876): 482; cf. *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1877): 335; cf. *idem.*, "Notes," (July 1878): 363; *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1882): 378.

¹⁰⁰Spurgeon, "Notes," (July 1878): 363.

evangelists preach and sing the gospel because, “like Paul, they have determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”¹⁰¹ Because of this Society’s commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, Elvin reported that there had not been a single meeting “without some sinners being brought to Jesus.”¹⁰²

The priority of gospel proclamation of the Tabernacle Evangelistic Society led Spurgeon to commend their work “as one of the cheapest and most direct forms of carrying the gospel to the people,”¹⁰³ and “one of the most useful and economical agencies for the spread of the gospel in the metropolis,” which is why it “deserves the help of all Christians who desire to see the millions of London converted to Christ.”¹⁰⁴ He said that the money spent on this Society “produces more preaching of the gospel than...any other means.”¹⁰⁵ This Society was unmistakably committed to the priority of gospel proclamation, a commitment that produced much fruit as lay preachers faithfully preached the gospel and worked to convert the lost all across London.

iii. Baptist Country Mission¹⁰⁶

This ministry supported lay preachers who went out to the villages that surrounded London in order to preach the gospel and establish churches.¹⁰⁷ Spurgeon called this ministry a

¹⁰¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1882): 598.

¹⁰²Spurgeon, “Notes,” (July 1878): 363.

¹⁰³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1880): 357.

¹⁰⁴Spurgeon, “Notes,” (July 1882): 378.

¹⁰⁵Spurgeon, “Notes,” (July 1881): 354.

¹⁰⁶This ministry was also known as the Metropolitan Tabernacle Country Mission.

¹⁰⁷*Autobiography*, 4:335.

“capital society” that “does a great deal of good upon very little money.”¹⁰⁸ At a prayer meeting in June 1877, several men gave accounts of the work that they had done through this ministry. Spurgeon reported that the evangelists of this Mission were able to establish three Baptist churches in villages and country towns around London, saying that these evangelists were “ready for more work.”¹⁰⁹ He said that if people in outlying areas need help in reaching their village for Jesus and establishing Baptist churches, they should contact the Baptist Country Mission and a man will be sent to them that will preach the gospel and seek to establish a Baptist church. Spurgeon loved this Mission because of its commitment to reach the areas around London where “gospel preaching [was] sadly lacking.”¹¹⁰

In an address delivered to the Country Mission, Spurgeon encouraged all young men who were called and gifted by God to preach to “open their mouths and preach Jesus, for the gospel cannot have too many faithful heralds.”¹¹¹ He reminded the members of the Mission of their primary objective, which was to “Go forth...and proclaim among the people of this vast city all the words of this life.”¹¹² He also reminded the readers of the *S&T* that this ministry was “one of the most useful of our agencies for the spread of the gospel in the heathen districts round the metropolis.”¹¹³ Spurgeon thus made it clear that the Baptist Country Mission was committed to the priority of gospel proclamation and the conversion of the lost.

¹⁰⁸Spurgeon, “Notes,” (April 1876): 185.

¹⁰⁹Spurgeon, “Notes,” (July 1877): 335.

¹¹⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (August 1884): 442.

¹¹¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Young Preachers Encouraged: A Short Address Delivered to the Metropolitan Tabernacle Country Mission,” *S&T* (January 1881): 4.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (January 1881): 43.

In September 1879, Spurgeon said that the “sole aim” of the evangelists sponsored by the College, Tabernacle, and Baptist Country Mission was to “win souls.”¹¹⁴ Because of this commitment to evangelism, these Societies were the means of “multitudes of sinners [being] led to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and many new churches [being] formed.”¹¹⁵ The Pastor’s College Society of Evangelists, Tabernacle Society of Evangelists, and Baptist Country Mission were sustained by Spurgeon’s commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, a priority that resulted in thousands of conversions and the strengthening of hundreds of churches across the United Kingdom through the means of Spurgeon’s evangelists.¹¹⁶

e. Miscellaneous Ministries

In addition to his church planting and international mission’s efforts, Colportage Society, and evangelistic societies, Spurgeon oversaw several other ministries that were committed to the priority of gospel proclamation. This section will illustrate that, though many of these ministries worked to meet various physical needs, the ultimate aim of each ministry was the presentation of the gospel and the conversion of the lost.

i. Day Schools¹¹⁷

As pointed out in the previous two chapters, Spurgeon was committed to the evangelization of children through the means of education. Besides the Orphanage, there were

¹¹⁴Spurgeon, “Notes,” (September 1879): 447.

¹¹⁵*Autobiography*, 4:335.

¹¹⁶Spurgeon believed that “scripturally there should be at least as much work done evangelistically as pastorally.” He asked, “How can any Christian community cover the land with its adherents?,” arguing that there was “no means at all comparable to the support of good, efficient, well-sustained *evangelists*.” See Spurgeon, “Acta non Verba: Part 2,” (February 1873): 52, italics his.

¹¹⁷Day Schools in England were sometimes known as “Ragged Schools” because the children who attended them were usually poor and only had rags to wear.

two primary ways in which he sought to do this, namely, through Day Schools and Sunday Schools. As mentioned above, Spurgeon wrote an article in August 1866 called “The Holy War of the Present Hour,” in which he argued for dissenting churches to be more proactive in establishing schools that would be committed to teaching children the Bible and seeking to lead them to Jesus. This is the same article that led Anne Hillyard to collaborate with Spurgeon in establishing the Orphanage. The establishment of an orphanage, however, was not Spurgeon’s primary ambition outlined in the article. He was mostly concerned that “there is no great Baptist public school,” and so he encouraged his vast readership to begin the work of establishing public schools that would train children in “true church principles” and seek to “lead them to Jesus.”¹¹⁸

Fifteen years after Spurgeon wrote this article, after the public education system of England and its School Boards had been established, he continued to challenge his friends and supporters to think carefully about the education of their children. Bemoaning the recent election of men to School Boards who did not have the best interest of Christians in mind, Spurgeon said:

The education of our youth has been by Providence entrusted in part to us as Christian men. Are we going to leave such a charge as if it were of no consequence? Is it, after all, a trifle how the rising generation shall be trained? Are Christian people so oblivious of their duties to their fellow-men that when asked to train the children, they reply, the work is beneath our notice, let the...sectaries settle such worldly matters?¹¹⁹

Though Spurgeon is not specifically advocating for schools that teach evangelical doctrine in this article, he is encouraging his readership to think carefully about who they vote onto the School Boards because the men who serve on the Boards will determine the trajectory of teaching in the schools. This is why Spurgeon argued that it was the “duty of each Christian man to vote for the best men for the School Board.”¹²⁰ By so doing, Christians would be able to “draw up politics

¹¹⁸Spurgeon, “The Holy War of the Present Hour,” (August 1866): 344.

¹¹⁹Spurgeon, “Notes,” (January 1880): 41.

into the light and power of the gospel of Christ.”¹²¹ Spurgeon thus believed that the gospel should influence the overall direction of public education in his day.

Spurgeon’s ultimate desire, however, was to see dissenting churches and individual Christians start schools all over London in order that children might be taught true doctrine and be led to Jesus. For twenty-two years (1868-1890), Spurgeon’s Tabernacle oversaw one such school that was attached to their almshouses. The subjects taught at the school were: grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, reading, spelling, French, writing, drawing, needlework, and the Bible. Spurgeon believed that, in light of the low educational standards of his day, people “in the neighbourhood of the Tabernacle will not find a better school for their children, let them look where they may.”¹²² The educational achievements of this school notwithstanding, it must be remembered that this school existed because of Spurgeon’s belief that schools should teach children the gospel and Christian principles. It can thus be argued that the Day School that was connected to the Tabernacle was the result of Spurgeon’s commitment to word ministry.

ii. Sunday Schools

Spurgeon oversaw a massive Sunday School ministry that extended beyond the walls of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The School that met on the Tabernacle premises had ninety-six teachers who ministered to over one thousand children. Another Sunday School met on the premises of the Tabernacle almshouses that included 180 children and twenty teachers. Yet another school met at Manchester Hall and Richmond Street and contained 320 children and

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Eric W. Hayden, *A History of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle* (1962; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1992), 76-77.

twenty-five teachers.¹²³

Spurgeon believed that the work of Sunday School teachers was just as honorable as that of evangelists. He said, “It is a mistake to suppose that the work of the evangelist is more honourable than that of a teacher.”¹²⁴ He also believed that Sunday School teachers should serve with one end in mind: the salvation of their children. In an address to the South London Auxiliary of the Sunday School Union in January 1867, Spurgeon used the story of Elisha raising the Shunammite’s son to life as a way of reminding Sunday School teachers that their students were dead spiritually and needed to be raised to life. He said:

Beloved teachers, may you never be content with aiming at secondary benefits, or even with realising them; may you strive for the grandest of all ends, the salvation of immortal souls. Your business is not merely to teach the children in your classes to read the Bible, not barely to inculcate the duties of morality, nor even to instruct them in the letter of the gospel, but your high calling is to be the means, in the hands of God, of bringing life from heaven to dead souls. Your teaching on the Lord’s-day will have been a failure if your children remain dead in sin.¹²⁵

For Spurgeon, then, everything else a Sunday School teacher may accomplish is merely a “secondary benefit” compared to seeing a child come to Christ. He challenged these teachers to not be content with aiming at these “secondary benefits” because the salvation of a child’s soul is more important than anything else, and, in a striking statement, he even says that these teachers will have been failures if their students were not converted. Later in the same address, Spurgeon said, “What you want, dear teacher, in your beloved charge, is not mere conviction, but conversion; you desire not only impression, but regeneration... This your scholars need, and nothing less must content you.”¹²⁶ Spurgeon made these forthright and challenging statements to

¹²³J. A. Spurgeon, “Discipline of the Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *S&T* (February 1869): 55.

¹²⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Our Sunday Schools,” *S&T* (March 1871): 100.

¹²⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “How to Raise the Dead,” *S&T* (March 1867): 100.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 106.

these teachers because of his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, a commitment that he wished these teachers to share.

By the end of 1891, there were twenty-seven Sunday Schools and Ragged Schools in operation under the auspices of the Tabernacle. There were 612 teachers and 8,034 students in these schools by the time of Spurgeon's death.¹²⁷ He always believed that these Schools were one of the best means available to reach children with the gospel, saying in his *Autobiography*, "Let us bring the young ones into the house of God by means of the Sabbath-school, in the hope that, in after days, they will love the place where His honour dwelleth."¹²⁸ Schools, whether Day Schools or Sunday Schools, were important to Spurgeon because he was convinced that through them the gospel would be proclaimed to the next generation and that children would be led to Jesus. The ministries of these schools were thus prioritistic, not holistic, in nature.

iii. Young Woman's Bible Class

Each week, a group of 500-800 young women met at the Tabernacle to study the Bible under the teaching of Mrs. Bartlett.¹²⁹ Spurgeon loved Mrs. Bartlett because she was committed to teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and she had a passion for the conversion of the lost. Concerning these commitments of hers, Spurgeon said in his *Autobiography*, "She aimed at soul-winning every time she met the class...Her talk never degenerated into story-telling, or quotations of poetry, or the exhibition of singularities of doctrine...she went right at her hearers in the name of the Lord, and claimed their submission to Him."¹³⁰

¹²⁷*Autobiography*, 4:336. See Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit*, 269, for a chart listing the number of teachers and students at all of the Sunday Schools connected to the Tabernacle.

¹²⁸Spurgeon, *The Early Years*, 5.

¹²⁹J. A. Spurgeon, "Discipline of the Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle," (February 1869): 56.

¹³⁰*The Full Harvest*, 81.

The Sunday after Bartlett died, Spurgeon addressed her class, reminding them of her commitment to the proclamation of the gospel and the conversion of the lost. He said, “I...rejoiced...in her holy resolve to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”¹³¹ Her care for the spiritual needs of the members of her class was a burden she constantly carried. Spurgeon said, “How many times she has come to me with the burden of your souls upon her...How frequently, also, did she tell me glad tidings concerning souls awakened and troubled ones brought to rest in Jesus.”¹³²

Bartlett’s “passion for soul-winning” is why she decided to stay in London instead of accompanying her son to America. “The mother would gladly have joined her son,” Spurgeon said, “but the lover of souls was stronger than the mother.”¹³³ Spurgeon closed the abovementioned address to her class by telling them that “if anything could make heaven more heavenly for her it would be if she could look down and see the class...passionately longing for the conversion of souls.”¹³⁴

Mrs. Bartlett was committed to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of the lost. Her ministry, one of the largest and most prosperous ministries at Spurgeon’s Tabernacle, was therefore word rather than deed centered, and prioritistic rather than holistic in nature. For her, as for Spurgeon, the essence of Christian ministry was proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

¹³¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Whose Faith Follow: An Address Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon to the Members of Mrs. Bartlett’s Class on the Sabbath After Her Lamented Decease,” *S&T* (September 1875): 408.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 409.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 410.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 412.

iv. Blind Ministry

Mr. J. Hampton, a layperson from the Tabernacle, developed a ministry to the blind people of London. The blind were often forgotten or relegated to the fringes of society, but Mr. Hampton believed that they must have the gospel preached to them and that a church must be started for them. In May 1875, Spurgeon spoke to Hampton's blind ministry, a group numbering one hundred and eighty. In reporting on this event in the *S&T*, Spurgeon urged his readers to give towards a chapel for the blind congregation as the congregation was becoming too large for their current meeting space. He praised Hampton's ministry to the blind, calling the work "one of the best in connection with the Tabernacle."¹³⁵ Spurgeon updated his readers on the progress of the blind ministry later that year, urging them to give towards that particular ministry because "these poor blind people must have the gospel."¹³⁶ He was persuaded that the blind people of London must have a gospel ministry focused entirely on them.

In his discussions of this ministry in the *S&T*, Spurgeon always emphasized the blind people's need for the gospel, or their spiritual needs, but never at the expense of their obvious physical needs. In the *S&T* of April 1876, Spurgeon requested that a wealthy person come forward and meet the financial needs of this ministry. In his plea for financial help, Spurgeon made the aim of this ministry clear. He said that someone should come forward to help Hampton and the Blind Society so that they may "preach Jesus to the poor blind, and to feed them at the same time."¹³⁷ And in 1876, Spurgeon said that the blind ministry was a "work of mercy" established for "the evangelization of the poor blind."¹³⁸ The aim of the blind ministry, for

¹³⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (June 1875): 293.

¹³⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," (October 1875): 498.

¹³⁷Spurgeon, "Notes," (April 1876): 187.

Spurgeon, was to evangelize the lost, but not at the expense of showing mercy to the poor blind by addressing their physical needs.

Spurgeon urged his friends and supporters to join him in the work of reaching the blind because it was a “Christly work,” and should therefore “not be long delayed.”¹³⁹ He grieved that the blind could not see physically but he “rejoiced to find that they could see Jesus.”¹⁴⁰ Their vision of Jesus came as a result of Spurgeon’s commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, a commitment that was embodied by members of his church such as Hampton.

v. Annual Outreach to Butchers

Spurgeon and the Tabernacle hosted an event each year for the butchers of London called “The Butchers’ Annual Festival.” Butchers and their wives were invited to the Tabernacle in order to enjoy a meal of immense proportions, followed by an evangelistic service led by Spurgeon. Over 2,000 butchers and their wives were fed in the large meeting rooms on the bottom floor of the Tabernacle and across the street in the Lecture Hall of the Pastor’s College. Each meal consisted of over a ton of meat, 750 pounds of carrots, 600 pounds of cake, and 200 loaves of bread. After the meal, the butchers and their wives were dismissed to the Tabernacle sanctuary for the evangelistic program. The service would begin with J. Manton Smith leading an “evangelistic choir,” followed by Spurgeon’s address to the gathering, in which he would speak to them about “their need for civility, morality, humanity, and true religion.”¹⁴¹

In the *S&T*, Spurgeon regularly praised this event because it allowed “working people

¹³⁸C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It’s History and Work* (1876; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 118.

¹³⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (August 1876): 384.

¹⁴⁰Spurgeon, “Notes,” (April 1876): 187.

¹⁴¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (May 1878): 225.

[to] see that the church of God cares for them, and aims at their good.”¹⁴² Commenting on the Festival of 1879, Spurgeon said that the massive event is worth the cost expended because some will be “permanently blessed by what they hear.”¹⁴³ He continued, “We believe that this great gathering cannot be held in vain. The men listen with great attention, and surely it cannot be that kindly reasoning with them upon temperance, kindness, and the fear of the Lord will all be lost.”¹⁴⁴

After summarizing the events of the Festival of 1881 and highlighting the various men who delivered speeches, Spurgeon asked the readers of the *S&T* to pray that the Lord would “bless the addresses to the conversion of many of the butchers.”¹⁴⁵ And after the Festival of 1883, Spurgeon reported that Jesus “was the main theme of the addresses,” and that he “was lifted up as the Saviour from sin.”¹⁴⁶ The preaching of Christ and the conversion of the lost were always the main themes of the addresses given at the Butchers’ Festival. This commitment of the Festival to the priority of gospel proclamation led to the conversion of many who attended,¹⁴⁷ fulfilling Spurgeon’s desire that people would be “permanently blessed” by their having attended the Festival.

vi. Metropolitan Tabernacle Loan Tract Society

The Loan Tract Society consisted of a group of individuals who distributed thousands of

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1879): 544.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Spurgeon, “Notes,” (May 1881): 242.

¹⁴⁶C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1883): 202.

¹⁴⁷Spurgeon, “Notes,” (April 1884): 198.

copies of Spurgeon's sermons in the area immediately surrounding the Tabernacle.¹⁴⁸ In November 1880, Spurgeon reported that there were ninety-eight people distributing his sermons to over 3,600 families every week. The distributors who visited these families were instrumental in bringing about "many encouraging cases of conversion."¹⁴⁹ Regarding the evangelistic success of this Society, Spurgeon said, "It is no small joy to know that thousands of our neighbors are by this society brought into contact with one or other of the friends of Jesus every week, and have left in their houses an appeal to their hearts."¹⁵⁰ In December 1882, Spurgeon reported that the distributors had visited about four thousand families and that twenty-four conversions had been the result.¹⁵¹ And in June 1885, he reported that 220,000 of his sermons had been distributed over the last nineteen months, and that "everywhere God has blessed [the distribution of the sermons] to the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers."¹⁵² This Society was therefore committed to proclaiming the gospel by disseminating Spurgeon's sermons, a commitment that led to the conversion of many.

vii. Other Miscellaneous Ministries

In February 1877, Spurgeon reported to the readers of the *S&T* that a group of members from the Tabernacle had hosted an outreach event for 450 men who worked in the coal mining industry. The outreach consisted of a meal followed by singing and preaching. Spurgeon said that offering these men a hearty meal in order to provide them an opportunity to hear the gospel

¹⁴⁸J. A. Spurgeon, "Discipline of the Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle," (February 1869): 56.

¹⁴⁹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (November 1880): 583.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁵¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (December 1882): 639.

¹⁵²Spurgeon, "Notes," (June 1885): 292.

was well worth the expenditure induced. These men were “not regular hearers of the gospel,” meaning that “the cost of the food is a trifle compared with the joy of getting them to listen to the gospel.”¹⁵³ Spurgeon loved these sorts of outreach events because they were focused on preaching the gospel to those who were lost, but not at the neglect of their physical needs. “We cannot expect them to hear on an empty stomach,” Spurgeon said.¹⁵⁴ So although Spurgeon was not personally responsible for this outreach event, his vision for the partnering of word and deed in ministry, with word being the priority, was embraced and regularly carried out by the members of his church.

In December of 1876 and May of 1877, Spurgeon had the opportunity to speak to over 1,000 men from the London Stock Exchange at the Cannon Street Hotel.¹⁵⁵ The meetings allowed Spurgeon to speak with wealthy and influential citizens of London upon “the weighty concerns of religion.”¹⁵⁶ These meetings are another example of Spurgeon’s commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, because when Spurgeon was given the opportunity to speak to one of the most influential groups of people in the most influential city in the world at that time, he purposefully chose to speak to them about “*the Claims of God*,” not the most pressing social concerns of the day.¹⁵⁷ Spurgeon noted that the men listened with “discriminating earnestness as [he] pleaded for faith in Jesus.”¹⁵⁸ Spurgeon used these opportunities to speak to these leading men of his city in order to proclaim the gospel and plead for them to trust Jesus for their

¹⁵³Spurgeon, “Notes,” (February 1877): 90.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid; idem., “Notes,” *S&T* (June 1877): 284.

¹⁵⁶Spurgeon, “Notes,” (June 1877): 284.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., italics his.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

salvation. This is in stark contrast to what would likely happen if similar meetings were held today, as many Christian pastors would likely choose to talk about less offensive topics like leadership or business ethics. Spurgeon, however, proclaimed the gospel and pleaded with these men to trust Jesus. This is not surprising due to his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation.

During the late 1870's, Russia's political climate was deteriorating, leading to thousands of Russians being banished to Siberia. When news of this reached London, Spurgeon told the readers of the *S&T* that there "is little that we can do for those who suffer this dreadful fate, but it is possible to give the distressed people the Word of God."¹⁵⁹ A Russian nobleman offered to help Spurgeon distribute Bibles in Russia by donating £75 toward the cause. As money came in, Bibles were distributed across Russia, despite the bleak political situation. This is yet another example of Spurgeon's commitment to the priority of word ministry. Although the Russian people were facing severe social challenges, it was their spiritual condition that Spurgeon sought to address through the distribution of Bibles.

In March 1882, Spurgeon reported on the work of the Richmond-Street Mission. This Mission consisted of a Sunday School, Ragged School, services for children, mothers' meetings, a Bible class for young men, a Pure Literature Society, a Tract Society, an Evangelists' Association, and other ministries aimed at reaching the community with the gospel. Spurgeon said that the Lord was honoring the work of this Mission because "the supreme object of their endeavours [is] the glory of God and the salvation of souls."¹⁶⁰ This Mission exemplified

¹⁵⁹Spurgeon, "Notes," (August 1879): 400.

¹⁶⁰C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (March 1882): 153; cf. idem., "Notes," *S&T* (May 1884): 245.

Spurgeon's commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation and the conversion of the lost through the agency of a multitude of ministries.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Total Abstinence Society met at the Tabernacle in March 1883. After tea, Spurgeon and others addressed the large assembly, reminding the Society that the ultimate goal of their work was not temperance, but conversion. He commended the Society for their commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation in their work, saying, "It is a great joy to us to know that the gospel is kept well to the front in the whole of this work."¹⁶¹ The result of this commitment was that many had been "not only reclaimed from drunkenness, but also converted to Christ."¹⁶² Spurgeon told the readers of the *S&T* that the leaders of this Society "do not intend [the Society] to become a temperance work with a little gospel tagged on."¹⁶³ Instead, they were "resolved to put as much as possible of Christ and free grace into all efforts on behalf of sobriety and abstinence."¹⁶⁴ Like the leaders of this Society, Spurgeon knew that the only thing that would ultimately solve the problem of drunkenness was the gospel of Jesus Christ. He said, "It is something to wash the [darkness] of drunkenness, but our hearts can never rest till grace makes them white once for all."¹⁶⁵ The Abstinence Society, a ministry that was formed to combat a social problem, had spiritual concerns as their ultimate aim. This was because they were committed to the priority of gospel proclamation.

In November 1886, Spurgeon reported that The London Tram Car and Bus Scripture Text Mission was now placing Scripture texts in eighty different tram cars throughout London.

¹⁶¹Spurgeon, "Notes," (April 1883): 203.

¹⁶²Ibid. Cf. Spurgeon, "Notes," (April 1884): 198; idem., "Notes," *S&T* (November 1886): 603.

¹⁶³Spurgeon, "Notes," (April 1883): 203; cf. idem., "Notes," *S&T* (May 1886): 247-48.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

Because of this ministry, “the Word of the Lord is constantly brought before a very large number of persons.”¹⁶⁶ Spurgeon praised this ministry because of their commitment to the priority of spreading the Word. He said, “It is impossible to tell how much of holy thought may be created by a single well-chosen text...publicly placed.”¹⁶⁷ This ministry may have been small in size, but because it was focused on disseminating the Word of God, Spurgeon believed that it was “one of the most profitable” ministries under his care.¹⁶⁸

These miscellaneous ministries under Spurgeon’s care not only illustrate his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation, but also his willingness to use any means available to get the gospel to people who needed to hear it. Tom Nettles agrees, saying, “Creativity in finding ways to get gospel proclamation to those untouched by the ordinary agencies on which the churches relied offended [Spurgeon] in no way.”¹⁶⁹ There were numerous other Societies and Associations connected to Spurgeon and the Tabernacle,¹⁷⁰ all of which were ultimately designed

¹⁶⁶Spurgeon, “Notes,” (November 1886): 603.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Tom Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 324.

¹⁷⁰At Spurgeon’s fiftieth birthday celebration in 1884, his assistant J. W. Harrald read the following list of ministries that were connected to Spurgeon and the Tabernacle: the Almshouses, the Pastors’ College, the Pastors’ College Society of Evangelists, the Stockwell Orphanage, the Colportage Association, Mrs. Spurgeon’s Book Fund, the Pastor’s Aid Fund, the Pastors’ College Evening Classes, the Evangelists’ Association, the Country Mission, the Ladies’ Benevolent Society, the Ladies’ Maternal Society, the Poor Ministers’ Clothing Society, the Loan Tract Society, Spurgeon’s Sermons’ Tract Society, the Evangelists’ Training Class, the Orphanage Working Meeting, the Colportage Working Meeting, the Flower Mission, the Gospel Temperance Society, the Band of Hope, the United Christian Brothers’ Benefit Society, the Christian Sisters’ Benefit Society, the Young Christians’ Association, the Mission to Foreign Seamen, the Mission to Policemen, the Coffee-House Mission, the Metropolitan Tabernacle Sunday School, Mr. Wigney’s Bible Class, Mr. Hoyland’s Bible Class, Miss Swain’s Bible Class, Miss Hobbs’s Bible Class, Miss Hooper’s Bible Class, Mr. Bowker’s Bible Class for Adults of both Sexes, Mr. Dunn’s Bible Class for Men, Mrs. Allison’s Bible Class for Young Women, Mr. Bartlett’s Bible Class for Young Women, Golden Lane and Hoxton Mission, Ebury Mission and Schools, Green Walk Mission and Schools, Richmond Street Mission and Schools, Flint Street Mission and Schools, North Street (Kennington) Mission and Schools, Little George Street Mission, Snow’s Field’s Mission, the Almshouses Missions, the Almshouses Sunday Schools, the Almshouses Day Schools, the Townsend Street Mission, the Townley Street Mission, the Deacon Street Mission, the Blenheim Grove Mission, the Surrey Gardens Mission, the Vinegar Yard Mission, the Horse Shoe Wharf Mission and Schools, the

to meet people's spiritual needs by proclaiming to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, though many of them focused on meeting physical needs.¹⁷¹

f. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of several of Spurgeon's other ministries and argued that these various ministries placed priority on gospel proclamation rather than social action, or on word rather than deed ministry. The College and Orphanage may have received most of Spurgeon's time and attention, but the ministries discussed in this chapter all fulfilled the ultimate aim of Spurgeon's ministry: the salvation of the lost through the proclamation of the gospel. Whether it was his church planting or international mission's efforts, Colportage Society, evangelistic societies, schools, Bible classes, outreach events to various groups, or any of the other multitudinous ministries that Spurgeon oversaw, the one nonnegotiable element of each ministry was that the gospel must be proclaimed. All of the ministries under Spurgeon's watch were unmistakably committed to the priority of gospel proclamation and the salvation of the lost. Nettles agrees: "All of [Spurgeon's] benevolences...subverted the ultimate goal of dispensing the gospel under the confidence that the perishing would be saved."¹⁷² Spurgeon's lesser-known ministries were therefore word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational.

Upper Ground Street Mission, Thomas Street Mission, the Boundary Row Sunday School, the Great Hunter Street Sunday School, the Carter Street Sunday School, the Pleasant Row Sunday Schools, the Westmoreland Road Sunday Schools, Landsdowne Place Sunday Schools, Miss Emery's Banner Class, Miss Miller's Mother's Meeting, Miss Ivimey's Mother's Meeting, Miss Francies' Mothers' Meeting. C. H. Spurgeon, "Mr. Spurgeon's Jubilee Meetings," *S&T* (July 1884): 373.

¹⁷¹Several of Spurgeon's more explicitly deed oriented ministries will be discussed in chapter 6.

¹⁷²Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth*, 343.

Chapter 5

Priority of Gospel Proclamation in Spurgeon's Sermons

This chapter will provide an overview of the central ideas and arguments of several of Spurgeon's sermons in order to support the central claim of this dissertation, namely, that Spurgeon's view of missions was word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational. Spurgeon's sermons represent the bulk of his literary output and should therefore be examined in order to provide an analysis of what he told his congregation and other groups on the topic of the church's mission. Several of Spurgeon's sermons to his London congregation will now be considered.

a. Sermons to Spurgeon's Congregation

i. "The Cry of the Heathen"

In a sermon delivered at the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall on April 25, 1858, Spurgeon says that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the one thing that can solve the world's problems and that the church should therefore prioritize the proclamation of the gospel over all other kinds of ministry. This is summarized well in the first point of the sermon, when Spurgeon says, "The greatest help that can be given to any people, is the preaching of the gospel."¹ He says that the gospel helps people in every possible way, and that those who do not have the gospel "stand in the greatest need of help."² The nations of the world that are under tyrannical rule do not need wars to be fought in order to establish freedom and peace, they need the gospel preached to

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "The Cry of the Heathen," *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 4 (1858; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 194.

²Ibid.

them. “If liberty...[is] ever to be fully known and realized,” Spurgeon says, “it must be by the preaching of the Word of Jesus,” and freedom will flourish in any nation “by the preaching of the Word of God.”³

Spurgeon goes on to say that many nations of the world are not only under physical oppression but are also in spiritual bondage due to superstition. He says that this spiritual bondage can only be addressed through the preaching of the gospel, because the gospel is the world’s “only” hope of being delivered from spiritual bondage.⁴ Spurgeon also argues that the gospel has the power to produce physical blessings in nations where it is preached. He says that, although the gospel is designed to bless men especially in regard to the world to come, it is also a blessing to people in this life. The best way to bless the world physically, according to Spurgeon, is to proclaim the gospel, as the following extended quote makes clear:

My dear brethren and sisters, if you would bless the world, in the largest possible sense, temporarily, spiritually, and eternally; if you would bless the bodies and the souls of men; if you would bless men in their children, in their houses; if you would bless them in their meats and drinks, and in all the necessities of life, the one simple means of doing all this, is just the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

Spurgeon makes one important qualification at this point, namely, that the gospel must be preached and received if it is to bring about salvation and civilization among the nations.⁶ In other words, the mere preaching of the gospel will not produce spiritual or physical blessing among the nations. Only when the gospel is received does it have the power to change lives and bless the world.

Wherever the gospel goes, Spurgeon goes on to say, “it blesses the human race,” both

³Ibid., 195.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 196.

⁶Ibid.

temporally and eternally.⁷ He says that the poor Hindus, the cruel Chinese, and the destitute Africans need the gospel more than anything. “I tell you,” he says, “of the distress, the destitution, the poverty, the nakedness, the misery, of the Bechuanas and the Bushmen; and I speak for these, and I say, ‘Christians, you have the means of alleviating their woes by sending them the gospel; will you not do it?’”⁸ Spurgeon thus believed that only the gospel could alleviate the tremendous suffering that exists among the nations.

Spurgeon then says that Christians who have no desire to aid in this work of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples may not be truly Christian. “You must have in you the spirit of propagation,” Spurgeon says, “desirous to win others to Christ, or else the genuine blood of Christianity is not in your veins.”⁹ The desire to propagate the gospel, Spurgeon says, not the desire to meet social needs, is what reveals whether someone is a genuine Christian or not. This is why he challenged his congregation to see to it that “by every means and by all means” they should seek to “aid the preaching of the gospel of Jesus” which is “the help for which all the

⁷Ibid. Robert D. Woodberry’s recent article supports Spurgeon’s conviction that gospel proclamation creates stability in the regions to which it goes. “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (May 2012): 244-74. Commenting on one of the implications of Woodberry’s article, John Piper said, “The implication (of social reforms being an unintended consequence of gospel proclamation) is that the way to achieve the greatest social and cultural transformation is not to focus on social and cultural transformation, but on the ‘conversion’ of individuals from false religions to faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. Or to put it another way, missionaries (and pastors and churches) will lose their culturally transforming power if they make cultural transformation their energizing focus.” Piper concluded, “This means that the missionaries that will do the most good for eternity and for time – for eternal salvation and temporal transformation – are the missionaries who focus on converting the nations to faith in Christ.” “Missions: Rescuing from Hell and Renewing the World,” *Desiring God Blog*, January 13, 2014, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/missions-rescuing-from-hell-and-renewing-the-world>.

⁸Ibid., 198. Bechuanas and Bushmen are peoples found in the southern part of Africa.

⁹Ibid. Spurgeon makes a similar point in another sermon. He says, “Dear friends, you sometimes say, ‘Will the heathen be saved if we do not send the missionaries?’ I will ask you another question, ‘Will you be saved if you do not send out any missionaries?’ – because I have very dreadful doubts about whether you will. Do not smile. The man that does nothing for his Master, will he be saved? The man that never cares about the perishing heathen, is he saved? Is he like Christ? If he be not like Christ, and have not the spirit of Christ, then he is none of his.” C. H. Spurgeon, “Labourers Together With God,” in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*, ed. G. H. Pike (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 134.

earth calls.”¹⁰

ii. “Preach, Preach, Preach Everywhere”

In a sermon delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1869, Spurgeon preached on Mark 16:15-16. He said that Christ’s command to “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” ought to be “lovingly cherished and scrupulously obeyed” by all Christians.¹¹ He says that this command is “the universal command of Christ to every believer,” not just ministers,¹² and that, although Christ does not mean for every believer to “go and play the orator to every creature,” he does mean that every believer has the business of “speak[ing] out the gospel simply and plainly to every creature.”¹³

Spurgeon realized that all the members of a church cannot “preach” in the way that the term is ordinarily accepted. “Yet,” he says, “if this command be for all, then must all bear that testimony to the world in some other outspoken manner.”¹⁴ Christians should therefore seek to preach in diverse ways: some through their holy lives, others by speaking to one or two, and others by distributing the gospel in printed form. The key for Spurgeon is that Christians “must do it (i.e. get the gospel out) in some way or other,” or “by some means or other.”¹⁵ He thus challenged his congregation to, “Do all, as much as within you lies, to make every creature know what the gospel is.”¹⁶

¹⁰Spurgeon, “The Cry of the Heathen,” 197.

¹¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Preach, Preach, Preach Everywhere,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 15 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1984), 626.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 627.

¹⁴Ibid., 628.

¹⁵Ibid.

Spurgeon then says that the extent of Jesus' commission in Mark 16 applies to every member of the church as long as there is a church on the earth. He says, "*As long as there is a church in the world* the obligation to preach the gospel will remain."¹⁷ "Preaching," Spurgeon says, "is to be for all time," and until Jesus comes back "the mission of the church is to go into all the world...and tell out the gospel to every creature."¹⁸ There is no geographic limit as to where the gospel should be preached. It is to be preached "everywhere, in every place," and "no nation is to be left out because too degraded" and "no race is to be forgotten because too far remote."¹⁹ The "mission of the church" is to proclaim the gospel to every race on earth, making sure that there "is to be no omission anywhere."²⁰

Towards the end of this sermon, Spurgeon again clearly states what he believes to be the mission of the church. He says that the mission of the church is to "tell...every creature of the gospel of Jesus Christ."²¹ He challenges his congregation to use the gifts they have to teach the young, to think of ways to do good in their own houses through parlor-meetings, or what might be called small-group bible studies today. If none of these things can be done, then perhaps they could write letters to people about Christ, or circulate printed materials like Bibles, gospel tracts, and sermons. He says that some have the gift of money and should serve the Lord with it: "If you have not the golden tongue, be thankful that you have the golden purse. Speak with that. You are

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 629, italics his.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid. In another sermon, Spurgeon spoke about the beauty of all races coming to Jesus. He said, "It is delightful to my mind to think of men of divers colours coming to Christ, and in the best possible manner proving the unity of our race." C. H. Spurgeon, "Others to Be Gathered," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 24 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1972), 557.

²¹Spurgeon, "Preach, Preach, Preach Everywhere," 633.

as much bound to speak with that as others with the golden mouth.”²² Though there are many ways of accomplishing it, Spurgeon says in this sermon that the mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel to all people. This sermon, therefore, serves as an excellent example of Spurgeon’s prioritistic, rather than holistic, view of missions.

iii. “The Master’s Profession – The Disciple’s Pursuit”

In a Thursday evening address given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on April 21, 1870, Spurgeon said that Jesus’ “profession” was to be his disciples’ “pursuit.”²³ Using Psalm 40:9-10 as his text, Spurgeon said that Jesus’ primary “profession” was to testify to “the gospel of [God’s] righteousness and of his grace.”²⁴ Jesus’ profession of preaching should therefore be the pursuit of every Christian. Spurgeon said, “It ought to be the ambition of every believer...to be able to say, ‘I have preached righteousness; I have not refrained my lips; I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth.’”²⁵ He believed that every believer ought to model Jesus’ ministry, not by performing good deeds, but by proclaiming the gospel. This view of missions is much more akin to representationalism, not incarnationalism.

Concerning the eternal destruction of the lost, Spurgeon exhorted his audience to do everything in their power to get the gospel to them. He said that the church’s “cherished purpose” is to “give them the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” and that the church

²²Ibid.

²³C. H. Spurgeon, “The Master’s Profession – The Disciple’s Pursuit,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 17 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1971), 109.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., 113.

should “do the best [they] can” in carrying out this purpose.²⁶ Spurgeon thus believed that the purpose of the church was to proclaim the gospel to those who were perishing. His thoughts on the purpose of the church, as stated here, have more in common with the prioritistic, rather than the holistic, approach to missions.

iv. “Marah; Or, The Bitter Waters Sweetened”

In a sermon delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on April 23, 1871, Spurgeon took Exodus 15:23-25 as his text.²⁷ This text contains the account of the Israelites murmuring against Moses because of the bitter water they found at Marah. Moses prays to the Lord and the Lord tells Moses to cast a tree into the water, and the waters become sweet. In this sermon, Spurgeon talked about the evils of the wilderness, the tendency of human nature to murmur, and the remedy of divine grace. This sermon was originally supposed to be a “missionary sermon,” but towards the end of the sermon, Spurgeon says he was compelled to preach on the bitter waters of Marah, instead of a more obvious missionary text, because of the sickness that he was then experiencing.²⁸

He closed this sermon by connecting the theme of suffering with the theme of missions, saying that, although Christians face suffering and trials of many kinds, people in other nations experience sorrows and sufferings to a much greater degree. The wars, satanic customs, and superstition of the nations led Spurgeon to compare the darkness of the nations to a “thirsty caravan gathered around Marah’s well where the water is too bitter to drink.”²⁹ He continues:

²⁶Ibid., 117.

²⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Marah; Or, The Bitter Waters Sweetened,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 17 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1971), 229-40.

²⁸Ibid., 239.

²⁹Ibid.

“Oh, the woes, the woes of mankind! High are the Andes, lofty the Himalayas, but the woes of the sons of Adam are higher, huger still...what mighty deep could contain the torrents of human grief? A very deluge is the sorrow as well as the sin of man.”³⁰ Spurgeon was thus fully aware of the great sufferings and sin of mankind.

He was most concerned, however, that the nations of the world who live in utter despair and darkness “know nothing of the healing tree (i.e. the cross).”³¹ These “sons of darkness” have many of the same griefs as Christians, “but they have not [their] Comforter.”³² There is only one solution to the common griefs and sufferings of humanity, namely, the gospel of Jesus Christ. “It is only at the cross,” Spurgeon says, “it is only by Jesus crucified that the world can be healed.”³³ Because Spurgeon believed that the gospel was the best and only remedy for the wounds of mankind, he exhorted his congregation to “present this remedy to those who need it, and who need it so much.”³⁴ Nothing will suffice as a substitute, nothing will heal the nations, nothing will awaken sinners, and no other tree will sweeten the waters of human suffering like the gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵

Spurgeon longed for the day when the Lord would pour out on his church “a missionary spirit,” a day when “young men...will not be afraid to venture and preach Jesus Christ in the regions beyond.”³⁶ The bitter sufferings of the world were not unbeknown by Spurgeon, and

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 240.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

neither was their ultimate cure. He was convinced that the gospel is what the nations needed most, and men who would take it to them are what he pleaded for in this quasi-missionary sermon.

v. “A Divine Call for Missionaries”

In a sermon delivered on April 22, 1877, Spurgeon preached on Isaiah 6:8, which says, “I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I, send me.’” This sermon begins with Spurgeon stating his belief that missionary work among the nations should be pursued because the lost are perishing and because the only way for them to be saved is through the gospel of Jesus Christ. He says, “Brethren, the heathen are perishing, and there is but one way of salvation for them, for there is but one name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved.”³⁷ Spurgeon’s commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation in missions is thus a result of these twin beliefs, namely, the final damnation of the lost and the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus.

Spurgeon then discusses how the vision of glory that Isaiah saw compelled Isaiah to offer himself for service to the Lord. He said that he knows of nothing “that will supply a better motive for missionary work...than a sight of the divine glory.”³⁸ After Isaiah saw the Lord, he was broken by his sin and the sin of the people to whom he was sent, and he was humbled by the majesty of God’s holiness. Spurgeon concludes that Isaiah was a worshipper before he was a worker and he prays that the Lord would raise up “a tabernacle full of worshippers first, and of workers afterwards.”³⁹ Those workers who have been touched by the burning coals from the altar

³⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “A Divine Call For Missionaries,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 23 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1972), 241-52.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 242.

of God are given “lips ready for preaching.”⁴⁰ This preaching should be motivated by Jesus’ work on the cross and the reality of perishing sinners. “Since Jesus Christ has died for us,” Spurgeon said, “we need to be touched with something of that same zeal for the rescue of others from eternal ruin.”⁴¹ The gospel of God’s grace in Jesus should create worshippers who are committed to the work of rescuing people from eternal judgment through the proclamation of the gospel.

The climax of this sermon came at the end as Spurgeon challenged his hearers to consider the divine call, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Spurgeon was utterly dismayed by the lack of people who were willing to take the gospel to the nations. He said:

It is grievous, grievous beyond all thought, that there should be such multitudes of men and women in the church of God who...never offer to go. What, out of all these saved ones, no willing messengers to the heathen!...Here are thousands of us working at home. Are none of us called to go abroad? Will none of us carry the gospel to regions beyond?...Here are multitudes of professing Christians making money, getting rich, eating the fat and drinking the sweet, is there not one to go for Christ? Men travel abroad for trade, will they not go for Jesus?...Can it be true that the majority of educated, intelligent Christian young men are more willing to let the heathen be damned than to let the treasures of the world go into other hands.⁴²

Spurgeon was perturbed by the fact that so many men would go overseas for business but not for the gospel. He then says that the Lord chooses to use “unwilling men” because “he is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”⁴³ Spurgeon thus believed that men preaching the gospel, however few, was the Lord’s chosen method of bringing salvation to

³⁹Ibid., 248.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 249.

⁴³Ibid., 249-50.

mankind.⁴⁴

vi. “Believers Sent By Christ, As Christ is Sent By the Father”

In a sermon delivered on May 11, 1890, Spurgeon preached on John 17:18, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”⁴⁵ As mentioned in chapter one, this is a key text to understanding the incarnational approach to missions.⁴⁶ At the beginning of this sermon, Spurgeon acknowledges that the church’s mission “grows out of” Jesus’ mission as the sent One from the Father, and that the church can learn much about her mission “by considering how the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”⁴⁷ But then he proceeds to explain this text in ways more akin to the representationalist, rather than the incarnationalist, approach to missions.

Under his first point, he says that there are parallels between Jesus’ being sent by his Father and the church being sent by Jesus. However, he hastens to add that these parallels are “drawn by way of quality, not of equality,” because Jesus’ mission was “on a higher scale than ours.”⁴⁸ Jesus came to atone for sins and initiate a new covenant, things that the church can never do. Yet, Spurgeon says, “there is a likeness” between Jesus’ mission and the church’s mission, even though it “be only that of a drop to the sea.”⁴⁹

Spurgeon says that Jesus’ mission was primarily characterized by his “complete

⁴⁴See C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (October 1879): 496, and idem, “Notes,” *S&T* (September 1881): 490, for how this sermon was used by God to lead several people to commit their lives to mission work overseas.

⁴⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “Believers Sent By Christ, As Christ is Sent By the Father,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 36 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 265-76.

⁴⁶See chapter one, 24-26.

⁴⁷Spurgeon, “Believers Sent By Christ, As Christ is Sent By the Father,” 266.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 267.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

subjection to the Father's will."⁵⁰ Jesus is coequal in nature and dignity with God, but he took a subordinate role when he obeyed his Father and came to earth. Jesus' mission, therefore, is primarily characterized as one of humble obedience to his Father's will. Representationalists like Andreas Kostenberger also emphasize this point, as it seeks to clarify the essence of Jesus' mission as one of humble dependence and obedience to his Father.⁵¹ Spurgeon would thus find himself in agreement with modern-day representationalists.

Throughout this sermon Spurgeon alludes to the primary task inherent in the church's mission, namely, the proclamation of the gospel and the salvation of the lost. He says that the church is "sent...to win souls...to instruct and save."⁵² The saints are left on earth and not taken to heaven so that they "may bring in [the Lord's] redeemed through the gospel."⁵³ Christians, like Jesus, are sent into the world to live among "unconverted, infidel, and impure men, that [they] may do for Christ his great work, and make known his salvation."⁵⁴ God's people, Spurgeon says, need to "perceive what [their] mission involves," knowing that they are "missioned from above" and that, with Jesus, they "have a hand in the saving of the world."⁵⁵ Although Christians cannot redeem sinners by the shedding of their blood, they are nonetheless "sent to seek and to save that which was lost by proclaiming salvation by Christ Jesus," and every person who is already saved "should feel that he is called at once to labour for the

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹See chapter one, 27-29.

⁵²Spurgeon, "Believers Sent By Christ, As Christ is Sent By the Father," 267.

⁵³Ibid., 268.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., 269.

salvation of others.”⁵⁶ The evangelistic mandate inherent in the church’s mission is thus emphasized throughout this sermon.

Under the second point of this sermon, Spurgeon explains why Jesus was sent into the world, saying that he “came here with one design,” namely, to save his people from their sins.⁵⁷ Jesus did not come to be “a politician, a reformer of governments, [or] a rectifier of social economics.”⁵⁸ Likewise, Spurgeon says that the church will be wise to keep to the “one business” of Jesus, namely, honoring God above all things. Christians should “take heed that they follow Christ in this unity of aim and purpose.”⁵⁹ Spurgeon himself confessed that he was not sent to preach about philosophical systems, to advocate certain political parties, or to “meddle with any of those social matters which can be better managed by others.”⁶⁰ He, and the church, are sent, however, “to preach the gospel of the grace of God,” and so he encouraged his congregation to “never get away from [this] one aim and purpose.”⁶¹

Spurgeon believed that the work of proclaiming the gospel was an indispensable element of the church’s mission. He says, “I venture to say that as the salvation of men depended upon Christ, so, in another sense, the salvation of men at this hour depends on the church of God.”⁶² His logic was simple: “If believers do not go and preach Christ, who will? If [those who] love him do not commend him, who will?”⁶³ Spurgeon’s belief that the proclamation of the gospel is

⁵⁶Ibid., 271.

⁵⁷Ibid., 269.

⁵⁸Ibid., 270.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 271.

an indispensable aspect of the church's mission is not unlike that of modern-day prioritists who also argue that proclamation must be the church's priority because only the church has been tasked to do this work. If the church does not proclaim the gospel to the world, the world will not hear the gospel.

Spurgeon knew that prioritizing the proclamation of the gospel would mean that other good and noble things would be left undone. He said, "If we are enabled to save men's souls by the Holy Ghost resting upon our teaching we may die content, even though we have left fifty other excellent things undone."⁶⁴ Christians should let spiritually dead people take care of these other good things because the work they require would be "more congenial to the dead around us than to ourselves."⁶⁵ Christians "cannot do everything," but they should do "that which [they] are sent to do."⁶⁶

In his discussion on the nature of Jesus' work on earth, Spurgeon points out that Jesus was first a teacher. He says, "Wherever he (i.e., Jesus) went he was an instructor of the ignorant. He preached of the kingdom, and of faith, and of grace."⁶⁷ Therefore, followers of Jesus should do what Jesus did, they should be "teaching the gospel everywhere."⁶⁸ Spurgeon also points out that Jesus' life authenticated his teaching. He says, "[Jesus'] every movement was instructive" because "he went about doing good."⁶⁹ Christians should, therefore, "make [their] life to be a

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 270.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., 271.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

part of [their] teaching.”⁷⁰ So although Spurgeon prioritized the verbal proclamation of the gospel, he also understood the value and power of a life lived in a manner worthy of the gospel. He thus challenged his congregation to remember that the “most solid and most emphatic teaching that comes from you should be what you do rather than what you say.”⁷¹

Under the third point of this sermon, Spurgeon spoke about how Jesus came to fulfill his mission. He said that Jesus resolved to stay the course and complete his mission. Similarly, he says that the church should be “constrained” to fulfill her mission because she has been sent by her Lord. What kinds of things is the church sent to do? Spurgeon answers with this challenge to his congregation: “‘Woe is unto [us], if [we] preach not the gospel!’ Woe is unto you if you do not teach the children, or speak to individuals, or write letters, or in some way fulfill your mission!”⁷² Spurgeon makes it clear that the church’s mission is fulfilled when the gospel is proclaimed in various verbal forms, or when church members carry out word, rather than deed, ministries.

b. Outside Speaking Engagements

i. “Gospel Missions”

On April 27, 1856, Spurgeon preached a message to the Baptist Missionary Society that had gathered at the New Park Street Chapel entitled “Gospel Missions.”⁷³ He plainly stated in the third sentence of the message what he believed to be the essence of Christian missions. He was

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 273.

⁷³C. H. Spurgeon, “Gospel Missions,” *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 2 (1856; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 177-84.

“persuaded” that it was “the absolute duty” as well as the “privilege” of the church “to proclaim the gospel to the world.”⁷⁴ Though some churches might think otherwise, he was convinced that the church’s mission was prioritistic in nature, saying that the church should “do its utmost to spread the truth wherever it can reach the ear of man.”⁷⁵

At a couple of points in this sermon Spurgeon seems to minimize the use of apologetics when carrying out the evangelistic mission of the church. He says, “We send educated men to India in order to confound the learned Brahmins. Nonsense! Let the Brahmins say what they like; have we any business to dispute with them?...Leave the men of the world to combat their metaphysical errors; we have merely to say, ‘This is truth: he that believeth it shall be saved, and he that denieth it shall be damned.’”⁷⁶ And, “We might give up all the books that have been written in defence of Christianity if we would but preach Christ.”⁷⁷ The important point to be taken from these statements is not that Spurgeon denigrated apologetics, but rather that he believed that proclaiming the gospel was more important than defending the faith. He relegated apologetics to a secondary role because he was convinced that proclaiming the gospel was the only way that the lost would be saved.

⁷⁴Ibid., 177.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., 179. Spurgeon also says that he is grieved when he reads reports of missionaries disputing with the Brahmins. He says that, even though it is thought to be a victory for the gospel if a missionary keeps his temper during a dispute with a Brahmin, he believes that “the gospel was lowered by the controversy.” He argues that missionaries should focus on preaching the gospel, simply saying to the Brahmins, “I am come to tell you something which the One God of heaven and earth hath said, and I tell you before I announce it, that if you believe it you shall be saved, and if not, you shall be damned. I am come to tell you that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh, to die for poor unworthy man, that through his mediation, and death, and suffering, the people of God might be delivered. Now, if you will listen to me you shall hear the word of God: if you do not, I shake the dust of my feet against you, and go somewhere else.” Ibid., 181.

⁷⁷Ibid., 182.

It bothered Spurgeon that many missionaries were forsaking the task of preaching. He said that, although missionaries can do many good things, the one thing that they should be doing is preaching the gospel. Missionaries, he said, work hard at “interpreting, establishing schools, and doing this, that, and the other.”⁷⁸ He did not deny the usefulness of this kind of work, “but,” he says, “that is not the labour to which [missionaries] should devote themselves” because “their office is preaching.”⁷⁹ He said that if missionaries preached more, “they might hope for more success.”⁸⁰ In order to make this point crystal clear, he adds, “We have our churches, our printing-presses, about which a great deal of money is spent,” but, although these ministries do much good, they are not doing “*the good*.”⁸¹ For Spurgeon, “the good” is proclaiming the gospel, and if missionaries are not willing to use the means that God has ordained to save his people, they “cannot therefore expect to prosper.”⁸²

ii. “Home Missions”

In an address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland on May 29, 1866, Spurgeon spoke on the topic of “Home Missions.” He stated clearly that the object of “Home Mission-work,” or “Church-work,” was “to testify the gospel of the grace of God to every

⁷⁸Ibid., 181.

⁷⁹Ibid. In a sermon preached four years after this one, Spurgeon made the same point. He said, “Our missionary societies need continually to be reminded of [the importance of preaching]; they get so busy with translations, so diligently employed with the different operations of civilization, with the founding of stores, with the encouragement of commerce among a people, that they seem to neglect – at least in some degree – that which is the great and master weapon of the minister, the foolishness of preaching by which it pleases God to save them that believe.” C. H. Spurgeon, “Preaching! Man’s Privilege and God’s Power!,” *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 6 (1860; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 485.

⁸⁰Spurgeon, “Gospel Missions,” 181.

⁸¹Ibid., 181, italics his.

⁸²Ibid.

creature.”⁸³ This object, or goal, of missions was not a belief peculiar to Spurgeon. He believed that there would not be many “dissentients” to his statement that gospel proclamation should be the priority of the church’s mission.⁸⁴ He said, “We shall be at one, then, in holding that the great end and aim of Home Missions is to testify the gospel to every soul.”⁸⁵ Leaders in the Free Church of Scotland thus appeared to agree with Spurgeon concerning the word-centered and prioritistic nature of the church’s mission.

iii. “Forward”

In his address at the annual College Conference on April 14, 1874, Spurgeon reminded current and former students of the Pastor’s College what their primary aim should be as ministers of Christ. “Our one aim,” he said, “is to save sinners.”⁸⁶ He exhorted the students to consider taking the gospel to the unreached nations of the world because there were still millions who had not heard the name of Jesus. He asked his audience this penetrating question: “Can we go to our beds and sleep, while China, India, Japan, and other nations are being damned?”⁸⁷ As he did on numerous occasions, he told his students that they needed to ask themselves, not if they should go to the nations, but whether they had any reason not to go.⁸⁸ He said, “Each student entering the College should consider this matter, and surrender himself to the work unless there are conclusive reasons for his not doing so.”⁸⁹ Spurgeon was convinced that, if some of his students

⁸³C. H. Spurgeon, “Home Missions,” in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*, 52.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁶C. H. Spurgeon, “Forward,” *S&T* (May 1874): 230.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 230-31.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 231.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

did decide to go overseas, they would “be among the best of missionaries” because they would make “the preaching of the gospel the great feature of [their] work.”⁹⁰ Spurgeon believed that his students would be successful in the work of international missions because they would be committed to the priority of proclaiming the gospel.

iv. “How to Meet the Evils of the Age”

In another address to the annual College Conference, Spurgeon preached a message titled, “How to Meet the Evils of the Age.” He said that the dominant evils of his age were superstition (i.e., Catholicism, Anglicanism), unbelief, disunity within the church, worldliness among Christians, and drunkenness.⁹¹ He then said that there was only one remedy that could cure these evils, namely, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the gospel is able to “meet all the evils of humanity,” its proclamation should be prioritized if the church hopes to effect real change, not only in the spiritual realm, but also in the moral and social realms of society.⁹² He said:

We have only to preach the living gospel, and the whole of it, to meet the whole of the evils of the times. The gospel, if it were fully received through the whole earth, would purge away all slavery and all war, and put down all drunkenness and all social evils; in fact, you cannot conceive a moral curse which it would not remove; and even physical evils, since many of them arise incidentally from sin, would be greatly mitigated, and some of them for ever abolished. The spirit of the gospel, causing attention to be given to all that concerns our neighbour’s welfare, would promote sanitary and social reforms, and so the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations would work their beneficial purpose. Keep to the gospel, brethren, and you will keep to the one universal, never-failing remedy.⁹³

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹C. H. Spurgeon, “How to Meet the Evils of the Age,” in *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1983), 91-104.

⁹²Ibid., 104.

⁹³Ibid., 104-05. Similarly, in a sermon to the Home Missionary Society delivered on June 25, 1878, Spurgeon argued that only when the hearts of men are changed by the gospel can true moral change take place in their lives. He said, “If a man can be made temperate, honest, to love his kind, and seek their good, it is to be done

Notice again that Spurgeon, although he believes that the preaching of the gospel can address all the evils of the world, qualifies this belief by saying that only when the gospel is “fully received” will the social and moral evils of the world be eradicated.⁹⁴ He was not naïve enough to think that a simple declaration of the gospel would immediately eliminate the evils of the world. The preached gospel can only transform individuals and societies in proportion to its reception. But in order for it to be received it must be proclaimed, which is why its proclamation must be the priority in the church’s mission.

v. “The Church’s Work”

In a sermon delivered to the London Baptist Association on January 16, 1877, Spurgeon spoke on “The Church’s Work.” He says that the “great end and object” of the church is to “bring others to the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹⁵ Every aspect of a church’s ministry should have as its aim the salvation of sinners. Even the “temporal work” of the deacons, that is, the ministries focused on meeting physical needs, should have as their goal the salvation of the lost.⁹⁶ These types of ministries “may be attended to in such a style that God himself deigns to make use of them in the conversion of sinners.”⁹⁷ In other words, it is entirely possible, and should be

by saving his soul, for when his heart gets right, his habits, his family, and his neighbours will, through his being blessed, participate in the blessing.” Spurgeon, “A Council of War,” in *Speeches at Home and Abroad*, 170. In other words, a fruitful word ministry that focuses on proclaiming the gospel and making disciples will result in physical, as well as spiritual, fruit. Spurgeon continued, “There would come an end of war, of slavery, of tyranny, of class legislation, if the great vital principles of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves, shall be spread by the grace of God in the hearts of men.” Ibid. Spurgeon was convinced that a robust and fruitful word ministry would bring about effects in society that are often only addressed by various deed ministries.

⁹⁴Spurgeon, “How to Meet the Evils of the Age,” 105.

⁹⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “The Church’s Work,” in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*, 113.

⁹⁶Ibid., 114.

⁹⁷Ibid., 115.

expected, that God will use deed ministries to save the lost. Thus, the ultimate aim of all aspects of “the church’s work” is the salvation of the lost through the proclamation of the gospel, whether through word or deed ministries.

vi. “Labourers Together With God”

In a sermon delivered to the Baptist Missionary Society on April 27, 1877, Spurgeon offers perhaps the clearest and most succinct articulation of his view of missions. He says, “I question whether any man ever spoke in a tone equal to the weight of this wondrous object – missions, the work of evangelizing the world.”⁹⁸ The “wondrous object” of missions is defined by Spurgeon as the work of “evangelizing the world.” Spurgeon believed that word ministry, or the proclamation of the gospel, was the essence of missions.

vii. “All the People at Work for Jesus”

In a sermon delivered to the London Missionary Society on May 9, 1877, Spurgeon preached from two texts in Joshua.⁹⁹ He encouraged the Society not to follow the advice of the spies sent to Ai who only sent part of the people to take the city (Joshua 7:3), and to obey the command of God to send all the people to war (Joshua 8:1). Spurgeon said that the Israelites had forgotten the commission the Lord had given them, namely, that all the people were to take part in the conquering of the territory that the Lord had promised them. “They were *all* an enlisted host for God,” Spurgeon said, “and he never ordained that a part only should go forth...”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Spurgeon, “Labourers Together With God,” 127.

⁹⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “All the People at Work for Jesus,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 23 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1972), 325-36.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 328, italics his.

Spurgeon takes this truth and applies it to the church, arguing that the Lord desires that the entire church be engaged in his service. More specifically, he says that the service in which all members of the church are to be engaged is representational, rather than incarnational, in nature, as “the Lord has sent all his disciples to testify of him (i.e. the Lord) and contend against sin.”¹⁰¹ Followers of Jesus are called to bear witness to Jesus, to represent him, not incarnate him, and the message that they are sent to “make known everywhere” is the message of the “glad tidings of his salvation.”¹⁰² For Spurgeon, then, all Christians are to be engaged, in one way or another, in this representational work of bearing witness to Jesus by proclaiming his gospel.

viii. “A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life”

At the conclusion of his sermon to the Baptist Missionary Society in 1884, Spurgeon says that the “urgency of the missionary enterprise” is the proclamation of the will of the Lord to those who have never heard.¹⁰³ But in order for the nations to do the will of the Lord, Spurgeon says that they must first know what his will is. This is why the priority in missions, what should be done “in the first place,” is that followers of Jesus need to “*see to it that the will of the Lord is made known* by heralds of peace sent forth from among us.”¹⁰⁴

Spurgeon says that the reason why the gospel has not been proclaimed to all people is because of the selfishness of Christians: “Why has it (i.e. the will of the Lord) not been already published in every land?...Is it not probably true that the selfishness of Christians is the main

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³C. H. Spurgeon, “A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 250.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., italics his.

reason for the slow progress of Christianity?”¹⁰⁵ He then urges the Society to give a million pounds towards missions in the next year, warning those “who fail to support missions when it is in [their] power to do so” to never say “‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done’ ...for fear of mocking God.”¹⁰⁶

In the closing paragraphs of this sermon, Spurgeon’s prioritistic approach to missions is clearly articulated. He argues that if God’s will is to be known, then “*it must be God’s will that we should make it known.*”¹⁰⁷ Spurgeon then says that gospel proclamation must take priority over every other kind of ministry. He says:

We want to bless the world; we have a thousand schemes by which to bless it, but if ever God’s will is done in earth as it is done in heaven it will be an unmixed and comprehensive blessing. Join the Peace Society by all means, and be forgiving and peaceable yourself; but there is no way of establishing peace on the earth except by God’s will being done in it, and that can only be done through the renewing of men’s hearts by the gospel of Jesus Christ. By all manner of means let us endeavor so to control politics, as Christian men, that oppression shall not remain in the earth; but, after all, there will be oppression unless the gospel is spread. This is the one balm for all earth’s wounds. They will bleed still until the Christ shall come to bind them up. Oh, let us then, since this is the best thing that can be, show our love to God and man by spreading his saving truth.¹⁰⁸

Notice that Spurgeon does not say that other means of blessing the world are inherently wrong or not useful, only that they are incapable of effecting true and lasting change in people’s hearts.

Only the gospel can do that, which is why mission work must focus on spreading the saving truth of Jesus Christ. For Spurgeon, this work of spreading the gospel is “the one balm” that can heal the multitude of earth’s wounds and should therefore be the priority in Christian missions.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 251.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., italics his.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

c. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of several of Spurgeon's sermons to his congregation and sermons delivered at outside speaking engagements, arguing that the ideas and arguments of these sermons all support the central claim of this dissertation, namely, that Spurgeon's view of missions was word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational. He unapologetically told his congregation and various other groups that Christian missions must be focused on proclaiming the gospel, reaching the lost, and making disciples, not improving living conditions, bringing in shalom, or fighting for social justice. Spurgeon did not seek to denigrate these types of ministries, but he did seek to clarify what the mission of the church is, namely, bearing witness to Jesus Christ by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples.

Spurgeon had no problem telling his church, various mission agencies of his day, and other denominational bodies that proclaiming the gospel was what they should be doing if they wanted to be doing distinctively Christian missions. This is a needed reminder for modern churches, mission agencies, and denominations, as the gospel truly is the "one balm for all earth's wounds."¹⁰⁹ Its proclamation should therefore be prioritized in the church's mission.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

Chapter 6

Spurgeon and Deed Ministry

In order to present the most accurate picture of Spurgeon's approach to missions, this chapter will discuss Spurgeon's commitment to deed ministry. Spurgeon's prioritism should not lead one to conclude that he showed no concern for people's physical needs or that he did not support specific ministries that worked to alleviate physical suffering. His prioritism simply meant that, for him and his church, the proclamation of the gospel was more important than meeting physical needs, not that meeting physical needs was unimportant.

After demonstrating that Spurgeon was indeed committed to deed ministry, this chapter will discuss Spurgeon's work to care for the Christian poor and his work to care for the general poor. Six factors that shaped his social ministry will then be considered, followed by a discussion of two of the most common critiques that are brought against Spurgeon's social ministries and Spurgeon's response to each. Spurgeon's commitment to deed ministry will now be demonstrated.

a. Commitment to Deed Ministry

Although Spurgeon prioritized the verbal proclamation of the gospel in his approach to missions, he was also an adamant defender of "proclaiming" the gospel non-verbally. This is evidenced by the multitude of deed ministries that Spurgeon oversaw and by clear statements that he made in his preaching and writing. Several of these deed ministries will be discussed below, but this section will provide examples from Spurgeon's sermons and from his monthly magazine that will illustrate his commitment to relieving physical suffering, or deed ministry.

In a sermon delivered to the Baptist Missionary Society in 1884, Spurgeon said that God's will was more discussed than done. He said, "We are best employed when we are actually doing something for this fallen world, and for the glory of the Lord," and doing God's will must eventually "come to actual works of faith and labours of love."¹ He thus believed that Christians should be actively loving people through various "works" and "labours," which seems to be another way of saying that he expected the people in this Missionary Society to be engaged in deed ministries. Spurgeon believed that Christians should be actively serving their Lord by serving others. This is why some have said that Spurgeon was "a typical evangelical activist."² For Spurgeon, a true Christian was an active Christian.

In the same sermon, Spurgeon spoke about God's concern for the physical, and not just the spiritual, aspect of a person's existence. He said, "When [the Lord] brought his people out of their bondage, he did not redeem their spirits only, but their bodies also: hence their material part is the Lord's as well as their spiritual nature..."³ Because the Lord redeems people's bodies as well as their souls, the church should therefore care about bodily suffering and not just spiritual regeneration. In a sermon preached in 1862 after a national disaster, Spurgeon said, "I would that we who have a purer faith, could remember a little more the intimate connection between the body and the soul."⁴ Spurgeon believed that those who are mature in the faith would realize that

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 245.

²Ian M. Randall, "'To Give the First Place to Spiritual Fervour': Priorities for Seminary Education," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 7, no. 2 (January 2007): 16. Peter Morden agrees, saying that, for Spurgeon, "the Christian life was an active life," and that, "Spirituality simply had to be lived out." "The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon: The Outworking of Communion, Active Exertion," *Baptistic Theologies* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 51.

³Spurgeon, "A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life," 244.

⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "Christian Sympathy – A Sermon for the Lancashire Distress," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 8 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1969), 630.

the Lord cares about the body and not just the soul, a realization that would inevitably produce deed ministries of all kinds.

Spurgeon also talked about the importance of addressing the needs of the body in a sermon entitled “Camp Law and Camp Life” based on Deut. 23:14. In his explanation of this passage, he said:

*The Lord cared for the cleanliness of his people while they were in the wilderness, literally so; and this text is connected with a sanitary regulation of the wisest possible kind. What I admire is that God the glorious, the all-holy, should stoop to legislate about such things. Such attention was very necessary for health and even for life, and the Lord in condescending to it, conveys a severe rebuke to Christian people who have been careless in matters respecting health and cleanliness. Sainly souls should not be lodged in filthy bodies. God takes note of matters which persons who are falsely spiritual speak of as beneath their observation. If the Lord cares for such things, we must not neglect them.*⁵

Although Spurgeon is here referring specifically to health and cleanliness, his overall point is still relevant for the current discussion. His point is that, because the Lord cares for physical bodies, the church should therefore also care for physical bodies, a care that will inevitably result in deed ministries aimed at addressing bodily suffering.

In an article in *The Sword and the Trowel* of October 1867, Spurgeon summarized the life and work of a man named James Henderson. Henderson was a medical missionary to China. He served in Shanghai and did much good in that city before his premature death. Spurgeon argued that Henderson understood the “wisdom of uniting in the same mission the skill that can alleviate man’s bodily sufferings with the truth that can restore to his spirit the life divine.”⁶ This quote

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “Camp Law and Camp Life,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 36 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 661, italics his.

⁶C. H. Spurgeon, “James Henderson, M. D., The Missionary Physician: An Example for Young Men,” *The Sword and the Trowel* (October 1867): 439. These and all subsequent references to *The Sword and the Trowel* (hereafter *S&T*) come from an eight-volume reprinted edition of the magazine published by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, TX from 1975-2006.

reveals that Spurgeon believed that simultaneously addressing people's physical and spiritual needs not only takes great skill but is also a wise approach to missions. Spurgeon saw the inherent value of "uniting in the same mission" a desire to meet people's physical and spiritual needs. In other words, his prioritistic approach to missions had room for deed ministries designed to "alleviate man's bodily sufferings." His commitment to the proclamation of the gospel did not come at the expense of addressing immediate physical needs.

In a short article in the *S&T* of May 1872, Spurgeon says that deeds are important, even necessary, for Christian missions. He mentions an incident in Italy where the coastguard had used their "speaking-trumpet" (an instrument designed to make the voice carry at sea) during their search for people after a shipwreck but took no further action to help those who were drowning. He used this incident as an illustration of Christians who talk about helping people but who never actually get around to helping people. He said:

What are words without deeds? You plead for the destitute, but where is your guinea? You are eloquent for fallen women, but what are you doing towards their rescue? You demand an educated ministry, what institution are you aiding? You pity the widow and the fatherless, to what orphanage do you contribute? Silence is most becoming in those whose speech is not illustrated by suitable action.⁷

Spurgeon makes it clear that if deeds do not support and "illustrate" one's words, then one's words will not be heard. In other words, though Spurgeon believed that word ministry was the priority, he also believed that the word of the gospel must be adorned with suitable deeds.

In the first part of a two-part article titled "Acta non Verba" in the *S&T* of January 1873, Spurgeon argued that churches and Christians needed less oratorical brilliance and more gospel-centered preaching and living. What the church needs, he says, are men who will preach and live

⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "Talk Without Work," *S&T* (May 1872): 210.

like Jesus, men who realize that Jesus' life and teaching was "intensely practical."⁸ Jesus spoke with authority and his words were "downright and direct," but Spurgeon argues that Jesus' words "were but the wings of his deeds."⁹ In other words, Jesus did not merely talk about doing good; he actually went about doing good.

He goes on to argue that Jesus' first followers followed Jesus' example by displaying the truth that they spoke. Spurgeon says that the early disciples "were not mystics, but workmen; not elocutionists, but labourers."¹⁰ In the same way, all Christians should be known by their works, not merely by their profession. Alluding to Matthew 25:31-46, Spurgeon says that on judgment day, those who belong to God "are not represented as having advocated the relief of the poor, but as having actually fed the hungry."¹¹ On that day, God's people will be known by their works, not their words. "True faith," he says, "proves itself not by its boastings, but by its effect upon the life of the possessor."¹² Teaching the ignorant, feeding the hungry, lifting up Christ, and reclaiming the lost is the "real work," "practical ministry," and "Christlike service" that Christians should be doing.¹³ Spurgeon thus believed that deed ministry, alongside word ministry, should play a vital role in the life of a Christian.

b. Deed Ministries Focused on the Christian Poor

Now that it has been established that Spurgeon believed in the importance of addressing

⁸C. H. Spurgeon, "Acta non Verba, Part 1," *S&T* (January 1873): 2.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, 3.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, 5.

physical needs, several examples of how this belief translated into actual ministries designed to meet physical needs will now be discussed. The following two sections are therefore devoted to Spurgeon's ministries that targeted the poor, discussing first his deed ministries that were focused on serving the Christian poor, followed by a discussion of his deed ministries focused on the general poor. The reason for dividing these sections is to illustrate that Spurgeon believed that even in deed ministry there should be a prioritizing of ministries. In other words, he did not believe that all physical needs were created equal. Spurgeon favored deed ministries that focused on helping poor Christians, endeavoring to meet the needs of the poorer members of his congregation and poor Christians at large before addressing the needs of poor people in general.¹⁴ Several of Spurgeon's deed ministries focused on the Christian poor will now be discussed.

i. Almshouses¹⁵

Spurgeon inherited the ministry of the almshouses from Dr. John Rippon, one of his predecessors at New Park Street Chapel. There were six almshouses in operation in conjunction with New Park Street when Spurgeon became the pastor. When Spurgeon's congregation moved from New Park Street to the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon decided to keep the almshouses connected to New Park Street in operation. After several years of trying to maintain a viable ministry in the old facility at New Park Street, Spurgeon realized that the costs involved in maintaining the facility were too great and that most of the converts from that ministry tended to

¹⁴Spurgeon's approach is akin to Duane Litfin's as discussed in chapter one of this dissertation. Litfin says that Christians are obligated to address the needs of Christians before addressing the needs of society at large. See chapter one, 11-13.

¹⁵An almshouse is commonly defined as "a shelter for the aged poor," or "a home or set of houses in which accommodation is provided for persons disabled by age or poverty." Eric W. Hayden, *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle* (1962; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1992), 20.

gravitate to the Tabernacle. So Spurgeon authorized the sale of the New Park Street Chapel along with its adjoining schools and almshouses.¹⁶

It would have been easy for Spurgeon to simply phase out the ministry of the almshouses when his church changed locations, but that was something that he was unwilling to do. After the construction of the Tabernacle was completed, new almshouses were built in 1868 within walking distance of the new church. The facility consisted of seventeen rooms for widows, two schoolrooms, a classroom, and a house for the schoolmaster. The Day School that met at the almshouses was attended by 380 students on weekdays. There was also a Sunday School, a special children's service, and other evangelistic meetings that were held at the almshouses.¹⁷

Women who were members of the Tabernacle, who were over the age of sixty, and who needed physical support and care occupied the seventeen rooms. Spurgeon said that the occupants "are generally chosen according to their number on the church-book and the urgency of the case."¹⁸ In other words, those who had been members of the church the longest and those who evidenced the greatest need were given preference in the admission process.

This ministry to the poor women of the Tabernacle is said to be "unique among Nonconformist places of worship" because of the "extensive accommodation which it provided for its indigent communicants."¹⁹ Spurgeon loved this ministry of meeting the physical needs of widows within his church. Mentioning Fanny Gay, one of the residents of the almshouse who had been a member of the Tabernacle for sixty-nine years, Spurgeon said, "It is a joy to provide a

¹⁶C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It's History and Work* (1876; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 93.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 94.

¹⁹C. Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), 368; quoted in Hayden, *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle*, 21.

resting place for her and the other aged sisters.”²⁰ Spurgeon wanted to eventually establish an almshouse for elderly men, but the funds never came in for it. He was content, however, to minister to the needs of his poorer sisters in Christ. He said, “Our aged sisters are worthy of all that we can do for them, and their grateful faces often make our heart glad.”²¹

As mentioned, the almshouses served as the location for several other ministries as well. There was a Day School that met in the large meeting room each day of the week, and there was a Sunday School that met there as well. In July 1877, Spurgeon said that he was “greatly gratified” with all of the many ministries that were carried out in the almshouses. He said, “The efforts there form an important part of our work.”²² The almshouses served as a center for word and deed ministry, as Spurgeon was committed to relieving the suffering of Christian widows and to the education and evangelization of the children of South London.

ii. Book Fund Ministry

Because Spurgeon was raised in a small country town and a small country church, he always had great sympathy for the “country brethren.” He specifically cared about country pastors who barely made enough money to provide food for their families. He said that these pastors “should be the objects of our sympathy,”²³ and that something must be done “to increase the salaries of these brethren.”²⁴ One practical way that Spurgeon sought to bless the poor

²⁰Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It's History and Work*, 94.

²¹Ibid. Spurgeon put his money where his mouth was. At the celebration to commemorate his twenty-five years of service at the Tabernacle, he was presented with a gift of £6,233. He gave £5,000 of this gift directly to the almshouses in order to establish an endowment that would sustain the almshouses for the long haul. C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (March 1884): 145.

²²C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1877): 335.

²³C. H. Spurgeon, “Home Evangelization,” in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*, ed. G. H. Pike (1878; repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 95.

country pastors of England was through the Book Fund Ministry.

The Book Fund Ministry was actually created and managed by Spurgeon's wife, Susannah. The story of its origination is as follows. In the summer of 1875, Charles published the first volume of his *Lectures to My Students*. After Susannah read one of the proofs, Charles asked her how she liked it. She said that she liked it so much that she wished she could give every minister in England a copy of it. Charles' reply was, "Then why not do so: *how much will you give?*"²⁵ Susannah said that she was "unprepared for such a challenge," and admitted that she "was ready enough to *desire* the distribution of the precious book; but to *assist* in it, or help to pay for it, had not occurred to me."²⁶

Susannah began thinking of ways to tighten their family budget so that she could support this new project. During this time, she discovered some money that was hidden away in one of the upstairs bedrooms. Counting it out, she realized that it was exactly enough to pay for and distribute one hundred copies of the *Lectures*. She said, "In that moment, though I knew it not, the Book Fund was inaugurated."²⁷

This small act of generosity on her part grew each year so that by the year 1886, the Book Fund had given 80,000 books to 12,000 poor ministers. A "vast number" of packets of stationery were also sent out so that poor pastors would have paper to write on. Copies of *The Sword and the Trowel* were distributed to pastors who could not afford a subscription, and 100,000 copies of Spurgeon's Sermons were sent out to missionaries and Christian workers all over the world. A

²⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "Love In Action," in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon*, 104; cf. idem., "Country Churches and Evangelization," in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon*, 161, 165.

²⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund," *S&T* (April 1886): 156, italics his.

²⁶*Ibid.*, italics his.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 157.

“Pastor’s Aid Fund” also grew out of the Book Fund, a Fund that subsidized poor pastor’s salaries, giving away between £300 and £400 every year, and provided clothing to poor pastors and their families.²⁸

These other aspects of the Book Fund’s ministry notwithstanding, the primary purpose of the Book Fund was to provide books for poor pastors. Spurgeon states this purpose clearly in the *S&T*: “The Book Fund aims at furnishing the bare bookshelves of poor pastors of every Christian denomination with standard works of divinity by various authors.”²⁹ In a book Spurgeon wrote detailing the major ministries connected to the Tabernacle, he reminded his readers that the Book Fund was created because his wife was “touched with the poverty of many ministers.”³⁰ Her desire was that “every penny” given to support this ministry would “go to really *bona fide* poor ministers of the gospel.”³¹ “Poor ministers” were defined as any minister who made less than £150 a year, and Spurgeon made it clear that “*Poor* ministers are the rule, not the exception.”³²

Through her husband, Susannah reminded the readers of the *S&T* that there were a “multitude of ministers who are hungering and thirsting for mental food.”³³ Charles believed that a minister with no books “is one of the keenest forms of poverty,”³⁴ which is why the “good work of providing mental food for poor preachers ought never to cease till the incomes of all ministers are doubled.”³⁵ The Spurgeon’s were thus committed to meeting a very tangible need

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Mrs. Spurgeon’s Book Fund,” *S&T* (February 1878): 75.

³⁰Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It’s History and Work*, 117.

³¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (September 1876): 434, italics his.

³²C. H. Spurgeon, “Mrs. Spurgeon’s Book Fund,” *S&T* (March 1880): 122, italics his.

³³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (December 1876): 568.

³⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Mrs. Spurgeon’s Book Fund,” *S&T* (May 1882): 218.

among poor ministers, devoting large amounts of their own money and time to this deed ministry focused on the Christian poor.³⁶

iii. Home Missionary Working Society³⁷

The Home Missionary Working Society's primary objective was to provide boxes of clothes for poor Baptist pastors, or missionaries, and their families. The Society met in June 1877 and reported to Spurgeon that "many boxes of clothes have been sent to poor pastors during the year, for themselves and their wives and children."³⁸ This society thus worked to meet a tangible need within the church, not society at large.

This Society was a "favourite society" for Spurgeon, as he prized its "modest but useful labours."³⁹ He loved this Society because he "deplored" the poverty that pastors across England were forced to endure.⁴⁰ He became aware of the widespread nature of ministerial poverty as he traveled extensively across England preaching the gospel. Once, while preaching at a certain church, Spurgeon noticed that the minister needed a new suit because the one he was wearing had holes in it. After his sermon, he told the congregation, "Now, dear friends, I have preached to you as well as I could...I don't want anything from you for myself, but the minister of this chapel looks to me as though he would not object to a new suit of clothes."⁴¹ So Spurgeon took

³⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (October 1875): 497.

³⁶Tom Nettles agrees, saying, "The provision of books...was considered [by Spurgeon as] one of the most necessary works of charity for the good of the church of God." Tom Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 374.

³⁷This Society was also called the "Poor Ministers' Clothing Society" or "Mrs. Evans' Home and Foreign Missionary Working Society."

³⁸C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1877): 334.

³⁹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1878): 365.

⁴⁰C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (December 1878): 602.

up an offering and enough was collected to provide the minister with a new suit. Spurgeon loved to meet the physical needs, however small, of poor ministers.

This Society exemplifies Spurgeon's commitment to meeting the physical needs of Christians, especially pastors and their families. He said, "Many ministers are very poor, and the clothing of large families is a heavy expense" and that there "is serious distress in a poor minister's home."⁴² He even went so far as to say, "If any needy ones in all the world ought to be relieved, these are among the first claimants."⁴³ Spurgeon encouraged his friends and supporters to help him in relieving this burden that many pastors carried, saying that "a box [of clothes] from this society is a great blessing."⁴⁴ He said that donated clothing did not have to be new or fashionable, because "poor ministers wives care little enough how people are being dressed in Paris, so long as they can appear decently among the good people of Little Silkington."⁴⁵ The "earnest and practical relief" provided by this Society to countless "overburdened and struggling ministers" serves to illustrate Spurgeon's commitment to meeting the physical needs of the Christian poor.⁴⁶

iv. Miscellaneous Ministries

There were several other ministries under Spurgeon's auspices that were focused on helping the Christian poor. For example, there was the Ordinance Poor Fund (or "Church Poor

⁴¹C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 2 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1898), 83.

⁴²Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1877): 334.

⁴³C. H. Spurgeon, "Holy Service on Behalf of Poor Ministers," *S&T* (August 1880): 414.

⁴⁴Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1877): 334.

⁴⁵Spurgeon, "Holy Service on Behalf of Poor Ministers," 415.

⁴⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (August 1883): 462; cf. *idem.*, "Notes," *S&T* (August 1886): 437.

Fund”), which distributed funds to members of the Tabernacle who were in need. As of 1876, the Fund was giving away around £800 each year.⁴⁷ This Fund existed for the sole purpose of meeting the “constantly-growing needs of the large numbers of poor members whom [the church] must continue to assist,” and serves as a good example of Spurgeon’s (and his church’s) commitment to meeting the needs of poor Christians.⁴⁸

There were also two Societies that, though they were not an official part of the Tabernacle’s ministry, did “much good” to the people in the church.⁴⁹ The “United Christian Brothers” and the “United Christian Sisters” provided money for members of these Societies who were disabled and money for the families of those members who died.⁵⁰ These groups essentially provided disability insurance and life insurance for Christians when such services were not widely available in society at large.

In an article in the *S&T* in January 1880, Spurgeon reminded his readers of the important work of the “visiting societies.” He said that wealthier Christians needed to get involved in one of these societies in order to be a blessing to their poorer brothers and sisters in Christ. He said, “Poor saints are to be consoled and cheered by the presence of their richer brethren.”⁵¹ Spurgeon believed that a personal visit was worth more than money to the poor, which is why he encouraged all of his church members to “become visitors of the sick and the poor” in order to relieve “human need for Jesus’ sake.”⁵² These visiting societies focused on ministering to the

⁴⁷Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It’s History and Work*, 119.

⁴⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (March 1884): 145.

⁴⁹Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It’s History and Work*, 119.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Visiting the Poor,” *S&T* (January 1880): 17.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 17-18.

Christian poor, not the poor in general, because of Spurgeon's belief that the church is one family, whether rich or poor, and should not be divided. He said that the wealthier members of the church should not "be content to be pampered while our brethren pine in want."⁵³ Because of Spurgeon's commitment to the good of the Christian poor, he encouraged the wealthier members of his church to visit and encourage the poorer members.

c. Deed Ministries Focused on the General Poor

As stated above, this discussion of Spurgeon's deed ministries aimed at helping the poor has been separated into two sections because Spurgeon distinguished between the Christian poor and the general poor. He made this distinction because he believed that helping the Christian poor was more important than helping the general poor. This should not lead one to think that Spurgeon did not care about the general poor. One of the reasons why he chose to build the Metropolitan Tabernacle where he did was because of its location in one of the most poverty stricken areas of inner city London.⁵⁴ Spurgeon had compassion for and supported ministries that aided poor people of all backgrounds, but he tried to follow the biblical pattern of helping the saints before helping society at large. Several of the deed ministries that he oversaw that were aimed at helping the general poor will now be discussed.

i. Ladies' Maternal Society

This Society was formed for the "aid of poor women in their confinements" during

⁵³Ibid., 18.

⁵⁴Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 401. David Nelson Duke also makes this point. He says that Spurgeon built the Tabernacle where working class people lived so that the building could be "more than a place for preaching services," but could be "used seven days a week as a center for a large number of social ministries..." "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Social Concern Exceeding an Individualistic, Self-Help Ideology," *Baptist History and Heritage* 22, no. 4 (October 1987): 49.

pregnancy.⁵⁵ In 1876, Spurgeon reported that 162 boxes of linens had been distributed to pregnant women that year.⁵⁶ And in 1879, Spurgeon reported to the readers of the *S&T* that this Society had helped about two hundred poor women over the course of the last year.⁵⁷ In November of 1884, he reported that this ministry had helped 243 poor women, and he hoped that some of them had been blessed spiritually as well as physically.⁵⁸

Spurgeon wanted this “work of mercy” to be expanded because “there is great distress around us.”⁵⁹ He said that, because “the poverty of London is appalling,” this ministry of helping poor women during their pregnancy “is a charitable work in which imposition is scarcely possible.”⁶⁰ And, because Spurgeon always sought to link deed ministry with word ministry, he went on to say, “Works of charity must keep pace with the preaching of faith, or the church will not be perfect in its development.”⁶¹ Spurgeon is thus quick to point out that the church must pursue deed ministries like this one while simultaneously preaching the gospel so as to avoid an imbalanced witness to the surrounding community.

ii. Female Servants’ Home Society

This Society was dedicated to providing “a home for servants while out of place.”⁶² The Society was able to help over 1,000 servants from 1875-1876, “shielding them from evil” by

⁵⁵Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It’s History and Work*, 119.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1879): 544.

⁵⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1884): 607.

⁵⁹Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1879): 544.

⁶⁰Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1884): 607.

⁶¹Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1879): 544.

giving them a place to stay at no charge.⁶³ The expenses of the Society were minimal, amounting to only £150 per year, leading Spurgeon to say, “Was ever money better employed?”⁶⁴ This Society is thus a good example of a deed ministry designed to help poor people in general, whether Christian or not.

iii. Flower Ministry

The June 1877 issue of the *S&T* is Spurgeon’s first mention of the Flower Mission. He “rejoices” that a group of young ladies at the Tabernacle had enthusiastically taken up the work of distributing fresh flowers with Scripture verses attached to them to people in hospitals.⁶⁵ In July 1880, he tells the readers of the *S&T* that the flowers from the Flower Mission give the City Missionaries an “easy introduction into houses where otherwise they would not be received.”⁶⁶ He asks his readers to send flowers from their gardens that will be used to “help our poor Londoners” and will “spread the sweetness and perfume of the Rose of Sharon.”⁶⁷ The Flower Ministry was designed to bless, both physically and spiritually, sick people in general, Christian or not, who were in hospitals and homes all across London.

iv. Miscellaneous Ministries

There were several other ministries under Spurgeon’s auspices that were devoted to

⁶²C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1876): 333; cf. Philip Paul, “Spurgeon and Social Reform,” *The Expository Times* 86, no. 8 (May 1975): 247.

⁶³Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1876): 333.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (June 1877): 286.

⁶⁶C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (July 1880): 358.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

helping the general poor. For example, there was the Ladies Benevolent Society, which made clothes for people who could not afford them. Spurgeon called this group a “very useful society”⁶⁸ and “among the best of our gospel agencies.”⁶⁹ In April 1880, Spurgeon reported to the readers of the *S&T* that almost £100 had been given to the poor through this Society in the previous year.⁷⁰

Because Spurgeon saw the usefulness of this Society and ones like it, he regularly chided the wealthier members of his church for retreating to the suburbs, leaving the more thickly populated and poorer parts of London underserved. He rightly asked, “The better educated are leaving the poorer people to themselves: is this right?”⁷¹ He said that, because the rich move to the suburbs, the poor are left with workers from among themselves, with the result being that the “Schools are suffering sadly” due to a lack of qualified teachers.⁷² In 1883, he again noted the disturbing phenomenon of richer church members moving to the suburbs, leaving “the poor to the poor.”⁷³ Even though he says, “Who can blame [the rich]?” for moving out of poor neighborhoods, he also says that the rich “should keep up their subscriptions to the charities which are intended to relieve the poorer districts.”⁷⁴ In other words, if the rich choose to move

⁶⁸Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: It's History and Work*, 119.

⁶⁹C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1881): 195; cf. *idem.*, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1882): 200; *idem.*, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1886): 195-96.

⁷⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1880): 191.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (November 1881): 584.

⁷³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1883): 202; cf. G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3 vols. (1894; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 3:85-86.

⁷⁴Spurgeon, “Notes,” (April 1883): 202.

out of poor neighborhoods, they should not stop giving to the organizations that work to help the poor in the neighborhoods that they leave behind.

Another example of Spurgeon's care for the general poor is the Stockwell Orphanage. Although most of the children admitted to the Orphanage had some connection to a Christian denomination, the "Annual Report...of 1882-83" showed that 132 children were admitted who had no specific denominational affiliation.⁷⁵ This means that Spurgeon and the leaders of the Orphanage were willing to minister to the needs of children whose families were most likely not Christian, illustrating Spurgeon's commitment to care for the general poor.

d. Factors Responsible for Spurgeon's Social Ministry

This chapter has argued that, his prioritism notwithstanding, Spurgeon was committed to alleviating physical suffering, or to deed ministry. There are many reasons why Spurgeon was committed to social ministries. David Kingdon, in a chapter on Spurgeon's social concern in *A Marvelous Ministry*, argues that there were six primary factors that shaped Spurgeon's approach to social ministry. These six factors will now be briefly discussed.

i. Upbringing

The first factor responsible for Spurgeon's social ministry is his upbringing.⁷⁶ Spurgeon was raised in a small country town and was thus acquainted with rural poverty, frequent deaths, and alcoholism. His upbringing is one reason why he felt compelled to defend the rights of the poor. He said that, if he "was an orator and could talk politics," he "would not care a rush for

⁷⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage, 1882-83," *S&T* (July 1883): 413.

⁷⁶David Kingdon, "Spurgeon and His Social Concern," in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 94-95.

Whigs or Tories,” but that he “would stand up like a lion for the poor man’s home.”⁷⁷ Spurgeon was a committed advocate for “the poor man’s home” because he grew up in one.

ii. Political Convictions

The second factor responsible for Spurgeon’s social ministry was his political convictions.⁷⁸ Spurgeon was an unashamed liberal (Whig), and he took his political views seriously, saying, “I vote as devoutly as I pray.”⁷⁹ He was always on the side of those who had been excluded from power because they were Dissenters in religion and against those “who looked down upon the poor from bastions of privilege acquired either by inheritance or wealth.”⁸⁰ His political convictions therefore shaped the way he thought about and addressed the social concerns of his day.

iii. Belief in the Voluntary Principle

The third factor responsible for Spurgeon’s social ministry was his belief in the voluntary principle.⁸¹ This principle stated that individuals (i.e., volunteers) could better meet the needs of society than could the State. At that time, the Church of England assumed primary responsibility in addressing the social needs of England. Each parish was responsible for meeting whatever needs people had who lived in that parish. One of the reasons why Spurgeon strongly opposed the religious establishment was because he believed that the State Church was not equipped to meet the growing physical needs then present in the cities. Kingdon explains, “At a time of rapid

⁷⁷From *John Ploughman’s Talk*, quoted in Kingdon, 95.

⁷⁸Kingdon, “Spurgeon and His Social Concern,” 95-96.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 96.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 96-97.

population movement from the countryside to the towns and cities of Great Britain, the parish system proved ill adapted to meet the spiritual and social needs of the urban masses. It appeared to many Nonconformists, Spurgeon among them, that the voluntary principle provided for a much more flexible approach.”⁸²

Spurgeon’s Tabernacle illustrated that voluntarism was the “best instrument of Christian charity.”⁸³ Its various ministries and institutions (e.g. the Pastor’s College and the Stockwell Orphanage) “demonstrated that without State aid, vital needs could be met by direct appeals to believing hearts and consecrated purses.”⁸⁴ Spurgeon thus believed that local churches were best equipped to address the social needs of England.

iv. The Metropolitan Tabernacle

The fourth factor responsible for Spurgeon’s social ministry was his church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁸⁵ Through the ministry of the Tabernacle and its various institutions, Spurgeon had direct and indirect contact with the poor. The majority of his congregation was middle-class, but there were large numbers of the lower working class in his church. The mission churches that were connected with the Tabernacle were mostly made up of the working poor. And of course, through the Orphanage, Spurgeon was intimately acquainted with the plight of the poor. Spurgeon was constantly reminded of the needs of his society because of the various ministries that were connected to the Tabernacle.

⁸²Ibid., 97.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

v. The Bible

The fifth and “most important” factor responsible for Spurgeon’s social ministry was the Bible.⁸⁶ His social ministries arose from what he found in his study of Scripture. “As he read, meditated upon, preached and practised the Book of books,” Kingdon says, “his social concern grew and found expression in a network of Christian enterprises of which he was the centre.”⁸⁷ Spurgeon did not gather from his study of Scripture that the Christian religion should be relegated only to the spiritual realm and removed from the social areas of life. For him, Christianity was a “present religion.”⁸⁸ He would not allow his hearers and members to escape into other-worldliness in order to avoid the obligations of the present moment.

Spurgeon not only found in Scripture a “this worldly” religion, but he also found the specific forms of outreach that this religion should take. David Nelson Duke summarizes this point well:

One begins to notice how often the theme of the oppression of widows, orphans, and the poor appears in Spurgeon’s sermons, and then to notice who were most of the benefactors of his social concern: the widows, orphans, and poor. One could argue that these were the most obvious people in need; but given the many possibilities for ministry, there seems to be a correlation between Spurgeon’s specific forms of social concern and the direction he found in Scripture.⁸⁹

Spurgeon found in Scripture a religion that was concerned with the social realm of life as well as clear directives concerning what social needs should receive the church’s primary attention.

vi. Sympathy

Sympathy was the sixth and final major factor that formed and sustained Spurgeon’s

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸*The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 4, 223, quoted in Kingdon, 97-98.

⁸⁹Duke, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Social Concern Exceeding an Individualistic, Self-Help Ideology,” 54.

social conscience. He believed that, in light of God's love as expressed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christians are bound to care about the plight of man. Because God deeply cares about the plight of people, Christians should likewise care about the plight of their fellow man. Spurgeon makes this clear in the following excerpt from a sermon he preached in 1862:

The Christian is a king; it becometh not a king to be meanly caring for himself...The Christian's sympathy should ever be of the widest character, because he serves a God of infinite love...To me a follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by the force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help he pities still.⁹⁰

Spurgeon believed that sympathy was a non-negotiable element of Christian ministry. Concerning ministers who had no sympathy for their fellow man, he said, "I know that a man in the ministry who cannot feel, had much better resign his office."⁹¹ He also challenged those serving in non-vocational ministries to serve with intense sympathy if they wanted their efforts to bear any fruit:

You Sunday school teachers, you must have warm hearts or you will be of little use to your children. You street-preachers, city missionaries, Bible women, and tract distributors, you who in any way seek to serve your Lord – a heart, a heart, a tender heart, a flaming heart, a heart saturated with intense sympathy, this, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will give success in your endeavors.⁹²

Sympathy was a driving force in Spurgeon's social conscience, as was the Bible, his church, his belief in the voluntary principle, his political convictions, and his upbringing. These six factors created and sustained Spurgeon's commitment to social ministries of all kinds, as it was his belief that the Christian faith should be demonstrated as well as proclaimed.

⁹⁰Spurgeon, "Christian Sympathy – A Sermon for the Lancashire Distress," 627-28.

⁹¹Ibid., 629.

⁹²Ibid.

e. Critiques of Spurgeon's Approach to Social Ministry

This section will address two of the most common critiques that are brought against Spurgeon's approach to social ministry and then provide Spurgeon's response to each. The two critiques are that he was not concerned with the restructuring of society and that he equated poverty with vice. Each of these critiques will now be discussed.

i. Not Concerned with the Restructuring of Society

Spurgeon has been accused of not being concerned with the restructuring of society, or of not addressing the deeper, more systemic issues that create poverty and other social ills. It is true that the primary emphasis of Spurgeon's ministry was the conversion of individuals, and that he did not focus on "advocating schemes for social betterment."⁹³ But historians have noted that it is not correct to infer that Spurgeon did not care about the evil and unjust structures of society just because he preached a message of individual faith and repentance.⁹⁴ Several examples of ways in which Spurgeon worked to correct unjust societal structures should bear this out.

In the June 1874 issue of the *S&T*, Spurgeon addressed the conflict that existed in the farming industry. He said that, in general, the farmers were being "unjustly blamed," and he expressed sympathy for them because they were underpaid and because they lived in poor housing conditions.⁹⁵ He said that "the agricultural labourer's condition in many districts is a disgrace to civilization, and must be altered."⁹⁶ His proposed solution to the problem was two-

⁹³J. C. Carlile, *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (1933; repr. Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, 1987), 218.

⁹⁴Kingdon, "Spurgeon and His Social Concern," 107; Duke, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Social Concern Exceeding an Individualistic, Self-Help Ideology," 55.

⁹⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (June 1874): 290.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

fold. First, the laborers must work harder and be as industrious as possible. Second, “a better style of farming must be followed,” meaning that a fundamental restructuring of the agricultural business would need to take place. He said that this would only happen if the Legislature “interfered.”⁹⁷

Because many farmers only utilized one quarter of their land, laws needed to be put in place to encourage farmers to lease out all of their land so that all of their land could be productive. This type of legislation would create more jobs because more land would need to be farmed. It would create more crops to sell as a result of more land being farmed. Farmers would make more money because more crops would be sold, resulting in higher wages for laborers because of the higher incomes of the farmers. Spurgeon said that his proposed solution would only work if Christian farmers would look not only to their own interests, but also to the interests of others.⁹⁸ There was, then, an individual aspect to Spurgeon’s solution, but Spurgeon also argued that the fundamental structures of the farming business needed to be changed. He wished all classes well in this struggle, desiring only that God would “defend the right.”⁹⁹

Another way in which Spurgeon worked to change society, rather than merely individuals, was through his support of a petition aimed at closing “public-houses” (i.e. bars) on the Sabbath.¹⁰⁰ He did not understand why “harmless articles” could not be legally sold on the Sabbath, while the sale of alcohol was legally permitted.¹⁰¹ His support of the petition does not mean that he believed that laws could ultimately change people’s behavior, but he did believe

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (April 1883): 202.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

that they were useful in limiting evil and maintaining order. He said, “We do not care much for sobriety by Act of Parliament, but we do care for anything which promotes order, lessens drunkenness, and helps to tranquilize neighbourhoods.”¹⁰² Spurgeon thus thought that society could be changed through the implementation of reasonable laws.

In the *S&T* of March 1886, Spurgeon highlighted the work of Mrs. Reaney, who was working to alleviate the harsh working conditions of tramcar drivers in London. Spurgeon agreed with Reaney that there is no reason why the hours of the drivers should be so excessive, and that something should be done to allow them to have a day off on Sundays. He said that companies who are earning a nine percent profit have “no excuse” for not paying their employees more.¹⁰³ He also said that shareholders would be wise to make their employees “feel contented with their situations.”¹⁰⁴ This is but another example of Spurgeon’s concern to address the unjust practices and structures of his society.

In his *Autobiography*, Spurgeon mentions his work to aid the “Early Closing Association.” This Association worked to shorten the workday and the workweek for laborers. Interestingly, although Spurgeon was “ever the ready and willing advocate of all who were downtrodden and oppressed,”¹⁰⁵ his primary concern was that men were being hindered from hearing the preaching of the Word because they were working too many hours. He said, “If you make a man work so many hours in the six days...how can you expect the Sabbath to be kept sacred by him?”¹⁰⁶ He argued that people are kept from coming to Christ because of this unjust

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (March 1886): 145.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵*Autobiography*, 2:336.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 2:337.

practice. “There are hundreds and thousands who are hindered from coming to Christ,” he said, “...because of the cruel system of the present state of society.”¹⁰⁷

Another area of society that Spurgeon addressed was the issue of employers employing young women to do physically dangerous jobs. In the *S&T* of September 1886, he mentioned a young lady who died after sustaining an internal rupture while lifting a heavy box at a business that only hired young women and that required them to lift boxes that only men should be lifting. Spurgeon said, “Such willful disregard of the well-being of [this business’] servants is quite shocking, and deserves exposure.”¹⁰⁸ He does not name names in the article or provide a thorough solution to this problem, but he does call on men in business to think more highly of “their fellow-creatures,” saying, “If Christianity will not move them (i.e. businessmen) to kindness, surely common humanity ought to do so.”¹⁰⁹ Spurgeon thus cared about the unjust business practices of his day.

As stated above, most historians rightly agree that Spurgeon’s primary social concern was not with the restructuring of society, but with the conversion of individuals.¹¹⁰ But, as these examples indicate, Spurgeon was not oblivious to the unjust practices and structures of his society. He cared about the low wages and poor working conditions of England’s working class. He cared about the prevalence of drunkenness in his city. He cared about women who were

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 2:338.

¹⁰⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (September 1886): 508.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰A. C. Underwood says, “[Spurgeon] had a profound sympathy with the poor and the unfortunate, but [it] is doubtful whether it ever occurred to him that a fundamental change in the social structure was needed.” A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1956), 221. Philip Paul agrees, saying, “It is doubtful whether [Spurgeon] ever thought in terms of a need for a radical change in the structure of society.” “Spurgeon and Social Reform,” 247.

forced to do men's jobs. And he thought that legislative action could be taken to address some of these issues. William Travis summarizes and illustrates this point well:

Spurgeon was neither a social radical nor a social reactionary. A successful middle class minister, he moved often in a middle class world, both in the church and out. But he was also a man of great heart who felt the poor were a group to whom he must keep. While he accepted the general outline of Victorian society, he was not averse to changes. In 1890, William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, published *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, a book calling for a major reorganization of British industrial life. Spurgeon wrote a favorable review, contending that the churches ought not to squabble over the details of social reform but ought to proceed in order that "the holy work be done."¹¹¹

Spurgeon, therefore, not only worked to help the poor, but he also supported people like William Booth who wanted to work toward restructuring society for the sake of the poor.

It must again be emphasized, however, that Spurgeon's primary concern was with the conversion of individuals to Christ. He believed that "a changed social structure does not necessarily mean a changed society," but that "changed individuals within society must of necessity bring about changed living conditions."¹¹² This is why he focused his attention on preaching the gospel and why he led his church to be aggressive in evangelistic ministries and not social ministries.¹¹³

¹¹¹William G. Travis, "Urban Pilgrims and Pioneers: Charles H. Spurgeon and the Poor," *Urban Mission* 10 (September 1992): 36. Duke similarly says, "While [Spurgeon's] primary concern was for individual souls, his compassion for all those souls in every dimension of their lives compelled him to speak fervently for radical changes in the attitudes of his society: on business, on war, on national pride, on relationships between the classes..." Duke, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Social Concern Exceeding an Individualistic, Self-Help Ideology," 55.

¹¹²Hayden, *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle*, 80. Drummond agrees, saying that Spurgeon "believed that seeing an individual come to faith in Christ and become a converted person still presented the best and basic means of revolutionizing society," and that "people's natures must be changed if society is to have any lasting change." *Spurgeon*, 403-04. Cf. Paul, "Spurgeon and Social Reform," 247; Duke, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Social Concern Exceeding an Individualistic, Self-Help Ideology," 47, 55.

¹¹³Kingdon makes two related points concerning Spurgeon's lack of effort to restructure society. First, he says that it is anachronistic to charge Spurgeon with not wanting to restructure society because the means needed for such a restructuring were not in the hands of Dissenters like Spurgeon, whereas the means to address immediate felt needs were. Second, he says that it is worth noting that "the twentieth century has witnessed human suffering on an unparalleled scale which is the direct outcome of attempts to restructure society from top to bottom." In other words, efforts to restructure society do not always produce the intended results. Kingdon, "Spurgeon and His Social Concern," 107.

ii. Equating Poverty with Vice

Spurgeon is also sometimes accused of equating poverty with vice, or with believing that all poor people are poor because of their sin. But Kingdon rightly argues that Spurgeon holds in tension two primary reasons for why people are poor: poor choices by individuals and the oppressing of the weak by the powerful.¹¹⁴ Concerning the idea that poverty is the result of poor choices by individuals, Spurgeon said, “Very much of the poverty about us is the result of idleness, intemperance, improvidence and sin.”¹¹⁵ And concerning the issue of the rich oppressing the poor, Spurgeon said, “Work-people...are often sorely oppressed in their wages, and have to work themselves to death’s door to earn a pittance.”¹¹⁶

Nettles points out that Spurgeon called both rich and poor alike to repent of their sins in the marketplace. The rich were guilty of oppressing the poor by not paying them a fair wage, and the poor were guilty of working only when their employers were watching. Thus, “no class in the society was exempt from the duty of acting justly.”¹¹⁷ So while it may be true that Spurgeon equated poverty with vice, it must be acknowledged that he also said that poverty was the result of the oppressive and unfair practices of the rich. Spurgeon knew that poverty was a complex issue and he sought to identify its sinful causes wherever he saw them, whether in the poor or in the rich.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 108.

¹¹⁵Kruppa, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Preacher’s Progress* (Garland Publishing: 1982), 165, quoted in Kingdon, 108.

¹¹⁶C. H. Spurgeon, “The Good Samaritan,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 23 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1972), 351.

¹¹⁷Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth*, 341.

f. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a broader missiological understanding of Spurgeon's ministry, arguing that his prioritism must be seen in light of his commitment to deed ministry. To this end, this chapter has demonstrated Spurgeon's commitment to deed ministry and discussed his specific deed ministries to the Christian poor and his specific deed ministries to the general poor. Six factors responsible for Spurgeon's social ministry were also considered, as well as two critiques of his approach to social ministry and how he answered them.

The burden of this chapter has been to show that Spurgeon believed that deed ministries were a necessary part of Christian missions. This is why, instead of neglecting them, he held them in high esteem. On one occasion, after commending those who faithfully served behind the scenes at the Tabernacle, Spurgeon said, "We want more ministries of the practical sort."¹¹⁸ He was asking for more deed ministries to be created because he believed that "the work of the hands is by no means a secondary result of divine grace upon the heart."¹¹⁹

Although Spurgeon held all deed ministries in high esteem, this chapter has argued that Spurgeon prioritized deed ministries to the Christian poor over deed ministries to the general poor. This point is illustrated by the scope of the former ministries over the latter. The deed ministries to the Christian poor that Spurgeon oversaw had a wider reach than did the deed ministries to the general poor. For example, God used the Book Fund ministry to bless poor Christians in England and all over the world. The wider scope of this and the other ministries to the Christian poor is not the result of a misplaced favoritism on Spurgeon's part. Rather, it is

¹¹⁸C. H. Spurgeon, *S&T* (August 1883): 425, quoted in Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth*, 340.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

because he believed that Scripture commanded the church to primarily care for the Christian poor, not the poor in general.

Spurgeon's commitment to the poor, Christian or not, was demonstrated by his incredible generosity towards them. He and his wife gave the bulk of their personal income to deed ministries of all kinds. Even at the time of his conversion, Spurgeon was willing to give everything he had to the poor. He said, "Had [the Lord] asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all, and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for His name's sake."¹²⁰ Spurgeon's generosity towards deed ministries that helped the poor provides irrefutable evidence that he believed in the legitimacy of deed ministry.¹²¹

Spurgeon's commitment to deed ministries focused on helping the poor was arguably as strong as his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation. One commitment did not cancel out the other, as Spurgeon held both with unwavering conviction. But he was clear that distinctions can and should be made and that, though both are important, there should be a prioritizing of gospel proclamation over social ministries in the mission of the church.

¹²⁰*C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 1 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 112. In 1854, his first year at New Park Street in London, Spurgeon wrote a letter to his good friend J. S. Watts, telling him that he had received over £18 from anonymous donors. He told Watts that he gave the money to "poor Christians and sick persons." *Autobiography*, 2:99. Spurgeon thus showed a commitment to specifically help poor Christians at the earliest stages of his ministry.

¹²¹The reader will remember that, at his twenty-five-year anniversary at the Tabernacle, Spurgeon gave £5,000 out of the £6,223 that he received to the almshouses. Cf. n. 21 above.

Chapter 7

Spurgeon and Contemporary Missiology

The church's mission has never been a static enterprise. There has always been a need for innovation and reform in the church's approach to the task of missions.¹ One of the purposes of this dissertation has been to argue that Spurgeon's missiology can provide a helpful paradigm for those seeking to recapture a more biblically precise missiology, one that focuses on the priority of gospel proclamation without neglecting the physical needs of those who suffer. Spurgeon's benevolent prioritism challenges modern missiologists and mission-practitioners to rethink the holism versus prioritism, or word versus deed ministry, debates, as it offers a way forward in the discussion concerning the nature of the church's mission.

Besides his prioritism, there are several other lessons that can be learned from Spurgeon's approach to missions. This chapter will outline seven suggestions that can be drawn from Spurgeon's ministry that will encourage and challenge contemporary missiologists, mission practitioners, pastors, and other church leaders to refocus their efforts on the primary mission of the church, namely, gospel proclamation. These seven suggestions will now be discussed.

a. Seven Suggestions for Contemporary Missions

i. Priority of Gospel Proclamation

The first suggestion for contemporary missions that can be gleaned from Spurgeon's ministry is his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation. Many of Spurgeon's

¹J. D. Payne says that there must be innovation in the church's mission if the gospel is to advance. He says, "Just as the history of humanity is filled with examples of innovation that resulted in breakthroughs that reshaped society, the church's innovations in missions will continue to result in breakthroughs that will glorify the Lord and reshape the bride as she waits for the groom." *Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), xiv.

biographers and church historians say that Spurgeon's approach to missions was holistic, rather than prioritistic.² This dissertation, however, disagrees with their conclusion, and has argued that Spurgeon's approach to missions was thoroughly prioritistic, rather than holistic, in nature.

This conclusion has been illustrated throughout this dissertation. For example, Spurgeon clearly said that the training of men to proclaim the gospel was more important than the work of caring for the widow and the orphan. Speaking in the third person, he said, "Even his love for the orphanage cannot make him place the college in the second rank. No amount of sympathy for the widow and the fatherless will ever make him forget the important work of training men to preach."³ Spurgeon also said that the various kinds of work that a missionary may be engaged in were all "subordinate" to the work of proclaiming the gospel. "There is a feeling growing up in many churches," he said, "...that there is less preaching by missionaries than in former times. Translations, writing tracts, and teaching knowledge are, I consider, subordinate things to preaching the Gospel."⁴

Spurgeon's prioritism is also evident throughout his sermons. For example, in a sermon titled "The Cry of the Heathen," he said, "The greatest help that can be given to any people, is

²Cf. Ian M. Randall, "'A Mode of Training': A Baptist Seminary's Missional Vision," *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (January 2007): 6; William G. Travis, "Urban Pilgrims and Pioneers: Charles H. Spurgeon and the Poor," *Urban Mission* 10 (September 1992): 35; David Kingdon, "Spurgeon and His Social Concern," in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 99; Mike Nicholls, *Lights to the World: A History of Spurgeon's College 1856-1992* (Harpden, England: Nuprint, 1993), 50; Peter Morden, "The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon: The Outworking of Communion, Active Exertion," *Baptistic Theologies* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 68; and Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 397. Drummond does not use this exact language, but he does seem to portray Spurgeon as a holist.

³C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *The Sword and the Trowel* (January 1882): 43. Cf. Chapter two, 34. These and all subsequent references to *The Sword and the Trowel* (hereafter *S&T*) come from an eight-volume reprinted edition of the magazine published by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, TX from 1975-2006.

⁴G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3 vols. (1894; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 3:178. Cf. Chapter four, 117.

the preaching of the gospel.”⁵ And in the same sermon he said that “if [the church] would bless the world...the one simple means of doing...this, is just the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶ And in another sermon Spurgeon states what he believes to be the mission of the church: “The mission of the church is to go into all the world...and tell out the gospel to every creature.”⁷ Because he was convinced that the gospel of Jesus Christ was “the one balm for all earth’s wounds,”⁸ he believed that its proclamation should therefore be prioritized in the church’s mission.

These statements by Spurgeon plainly reveal him to be a prioritist. His belief in the logical priority⁹ of gospel proclamation serves as a corrective for contemporary missiologists, who increasingly argue that the church’s mission should be holistic, or incarnational, in nature.¹⁰

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “The Cry of the Heathen,” *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 4 (1858; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 194. Cf. Chapter five, 143.

⁶*Ibid.*, 196. Cf. Chapter five, 144.

⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Preach, Preach, Preach Everywhere,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 15 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1984), 629. Cf. Chapter five, 147.

⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life,” *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 251. Cf. Chapter five, 165.

⁹Christopher Little agrees with Spurgeon, saying, “Although evangelism may not necessarily assume a temporal priority, it remains the logical one.” Christopher R. Little, “In Response to ‘The Future of Evangelicals in Mission,’” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 214. Scott Moreau, et al, also argue that proclaiming the gospel is the logical priority in the church’s mission, saying, “Evangelism is to be given a logical (not necessarily a temporal) priority in the total mission of the church.” A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 88-89.

¹⁰E.g., Reggie McNeal, who, in fairness, is best classified as a restrained holist, says that the modern church has wrongfully assumed that her primary mission is to “proclaim truth in a world increasingly hostile to God.” He says that the way the church will reach people today is by adopting “an intentional life of blessing people.” *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 56-7. Similarly, Bob Roberts Jr. says, “The kingdom is not just about proclamation to the nations; it’s about inauguration. It’s about healing; it’s about helping – digging wells, feeding the hungry, building shelters, teaching farming, opening up small microbusinesses; all of these and a thousand other things are ways we emphasize God’s love for the nations.” *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 163. Cf. Ralph D. Winter, “The Future of Evangelicals in Mission,” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 190.

There are, however, several contemporary missiologists who would agree with Spurgeon's emphasis on the priority of gospel proclamation,¹¹ but their position is often misunderstood by holists who claim that prioritists do not care about social ministry. Spurgeon's benevolent prioritism provides a model for prioritists who want to avoid this charge.

ii. Making the Aim of Conversion Explicit

The second suggestion for contemporary missions that can be ascertained from Spurgeon's ministry is his practice of making the conversion of sinners to Christ the explicit aim of the church's various ministries. This practice is best articulated in a statement he made concerning how he believed the church should grow. Because he loathed the thought of growing a church by stealing members from other churches, he clearly stated that the aim of his ministry was to reach the unreached, to build his church by reaching the lost, not by stealing the saved. He said:

It has ever been my desire, not to "compass sea and land to make proselytes" from other denominations; but to gather into our ranks those who have not been previously connected with any body of believers, or, indeed, who have attended any house of prayer...I should reckon it to be a burning disgrace if it could be truthfully said, "The large church under that man's pastoral care is composed of members whom he stole away from other Christian churches;" but I value beyond all price the godless and the careless, who have been brought out from the world into communion with Christ...Far rather would we be busy, looking after perishing souls, than cajoling unstable ones from their present place of worship. To recruit one regiment from another, is no real strengthening of the army; to bring in fresh men, should be the aim of all.¹²

¹¹E.g., John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne recently stated that "nothing is more important than communicating the good news of Jesus," and that a missionary strategy "that is not guided by the principle of evangelism is not a missionary strategy." *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 47-48. Craig Ott, Stephen Strauss, and Timothy Tennent argue that, although "humanization and liberation" are a "Christian obligation," it is the "gospel mandate" that is "most foundational and central to the mission of the church." *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 156. Timothy Keller says that, while Christians should minister in word and deed, "It is best to speak of the 'mission of the church,' strictly conceived, as being the proclamation of the Word." *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), 216, n. 128.

¹²C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 2 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1898), 136-37.

Spurgeon thus made the conversion of the lost the explicit aim of his pastoral ministry.

This dissertation has provided several examples of how Spurgeon made this aim the explicit objective of his ministry. For example, through the Pastor's College, Spurgeon sought to train men who would "aim...at the winning of souls."¹³ He told his students that, "if souls are not won...I have lived in vain as to the master-work of my life."¹⁴ Spurgeon said that the care of the children's souls at the Orphanage "will be our first and highest concern."¹⁵ He made this purpose of the Orphanage unmistakably clear, saying, "We have no object in view but the glory of God, by the instruction of fatherless boys in the ways of the Lord, having a special view to their souls' salvation,"¹⁶ and, "The great object [of the Orphanage] is to train the boys in the fear of the Lord, hoping by God's blessing they may be truly converted before they leave us."¹⁷ Spurgeon's desire was that "each one of our children [at the Orphanage] should become a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus."¹⁸

Spurgeon also said that the primary aim of the Colportage Society was "to be an aggressive evangelistic agency,"¹⁹ and that the "object of the colporteur," was to "above all, lead

¹³C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, By His Wife and His Private Secretary*, vol. 3 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), 129. Cf. Chapter two, 47.

¹⁴*Autobiography*, 3:159. Cf. Chapter two, 67.

¹⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Our Orphanage," *S&T* (1867): 233. Cf. Chapter three, 82.

¹⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "Stockwell Orphanage," *S&T* (1867): 325. Cf. Chapter three, 82.

¹⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage for Fatherless Boys, Clapham Road, 1876-77," *S&T* (July 1877): 342; cf. C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage for Fatherless Boys, 1878-79," *S&T* (1879): 3. Cf. Chapter three, 83.

¹⁸Spurgeon, "Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage, 1884-85," *S&T* (August 1885): 451. Cf. Chapter three, 84.

¹⁹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (April 1880): 193. Cf. Chapter four, 119.

sinner to the Saviour.”²⁰ He believed that public schools should be established that would seek to “lead [children] to Jesus.”²¹ And he believed that the primary aim of Sunday School teachers should be the conversion of their students. He said, “Beloved teachers...may you strive for the grandest of all ends, the salvation of immortal souls...”²² And at the annual College Conference held in 1874, Spurgeon reminded his former and current students that, as ministers, “Our one aim is to save sinners.”²³

As these statements indicate, Spurgeon plainly and repeatedly stated that the primary aim of his various ministries was the conversion of sinners. His making this objective explicit serves as an example for modern day missiologists, mission-practitioners, pastors, and church leaders to emulate, as making the aim of the church’s mission explicit gives churches and Christians an unambiguous and precise vision of what they are actually supposed to be working towards. Spurgeon modeled this effectively, which is probably why he oversaw one of the most evangelistically fruitful ministries in the history of the Christian church. Clear vision usually results in clear results.

iii. Commitment to International Missions and Church Planting

The third suggestion for contemporary missions that can be drawn from Spurgeon’s ministry is his commitment to international missions and church planting. The modern mission’s movement was still in its beginning stages in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, making Spurgeon’s repeated appeals that people should consider leaving the comforts of England in

²⁰C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (October 1884): 561. Cf. Chapter four, 121.

²¹C. H. Spurgeon, “The Holy War of the Present Hour,” *S&T* (August 1866): 344. Cf. Chapter four, 128.

²²C. H. Spurgeon, “How to Raise the Dead,” *S&T* (March 1867): 100. Cf. Chapter four, 130.

²³C. H. Spurgeon, “Forward,” *S&T* (May 1874): 230. Cf. Chapter five, 159.

order to serve in faraway places more uncommon than they might be considered today.

International missions in Spurgeon's day required that people make long-term commitments, as there was no such thing as "short term" mission trips then. And the significant cost involved in sending international missionaries made it difficult for churches and organizations to send and support those who did commit to go.

It was a different story for Spurgeon and his church, however. By the time his Pastor's College was twenty years old, more than ten percent of the students who had been trained there had left England to serve in places such as India, China, Africa, and the United States.²⁴

Spurgeon considered it "the highest honour the College can have, to send out missionaries to heathen lands."²⁵ His commitment to international missions is also supported by his long and fruitful partnership with Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. This partnership produced much fruit by way of funds raised for Taylor's Mission through the Tabernacle and by way of Tabernacle members and students from the College who committed to serve with Taylor in China in order to reach those who had never heard the gospel.²⁶

Spurgeon's international mission work should encourage and challenge churches and Christians to pursue their work among the nations in a distinctly Christian way, namely, by prioritizing gospel proclamation over social ministry. There are myriad secular organizations that work to improve living conditions among the poor and towards the alleviation of physical suffering of all kinds. But there is only one organization – the church of Jesus Christ, which has been tasked with the work of proclaiming the gospel. Spurgeon and his church understood this,

²⁴Cf. Chapter four, 107.

²⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (January 1875): 44. Cf. Chapter four, 107-8.

²⁶Cf. Chapter four, 112-114.

and modern-day churches would do well to emulate their approach by taking up their God-given and unique mission among the nations, namely, the proclamation of the gospel.

Spurgeon was also committed to church planting, as pointed out in chapter four. He believed that his church (the largest church in the world at that time) should be multiplying itself, not merely adding numbers to its rolls. At the outset of the building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon said, “We do not mean to build this Tabernacle as our nest, and then to be idle. We must go from strength to strength, and be a missionary church, and never rest until, not only this neighbourhood, but our country, of which it is said that some parts are as dark as India, shall have been enlightened with the gospel.”²⁷ Spurgeon believed that church planting was the “chief agency for carrying the gospel into new regions.”²⁸ This belief was driven by his awareness of the increasing population of the metropolitan London area and by his urgency to get the gospel to the untold masses that were flocking to London at that time.

Spurgeon’s Pastor’s College became the training ground for “evangelistic church planters”²⁹ that he would send out all across the greater-London area and beyond. Concerning these men who he would send out as church planters, he said, “Our [College] brethren are not sitting down, waiting to be called to settled charges, and comfortable incomes...they are willing to go wherever there is an opening for preaching Christ, and gathering a church.”³⁰ In the *S&T* of May 1878, Spurgeon gave a brief description of forty-nine churches that were planted through

²⁷*Autobiography*, 2:329.

²⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Acta non Verba: Part 2,” *S&T* (February 1873): 51. Cf. Chapter four, 103.

²⁹Michael Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist, Part 2: The Principles and Practice of the Pastors’ College,” *Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (April 1987): 91. Cf. Chapter two, 35.

³⁰*Annual Paper Concerning the Lord’s Work in Connection with the Pastors’ College*, 1890-91, 4, quoted in Randall, “A Mode of Training,” 11. Cf. Chapter two, 48.

the work of students from the Pastor's College.³¹ So in the College's first twenty years, students from the College had planted almost fifty churches, illustrating the church-planting ethos of Spurgeon's favorite Institution.³²

Spurgeon's commitment to church planting serves as a corrective for the contemporary church in at least two ways. First, his example should encourage more churches and pastors to engage in the work of church planting. Many, if not most, evangelical churches have never planted a church or sent out a church planter. This should not be! Throughout her history, the church has grown by multiplication, not addition. Spurgeon knew this, which is why it made him uncomfortable that people commuted to inner city London in order to go to the Tabernacle. He did not want the Tabernacle to be a regional church. Instead, he desired to plant churches in all sectors of the metropolitan London area, in order that people might have a faithful gospel witness near to where they lived and worked. Spurgeon may have pastored a megachurch, but throughout his ministry he worked tirelessly to plant dozens of smaller churches that would reach the masses of metropolitan London.

The second corrective to be gleaned from Spurgeon's commitment to church planting is that he did not depend on outside agencies to train, equip, and send out his church planters. Rather, he initiated and carried out this work through his local church. This is not to say that partnering with outside agencies, such as mission boards and seminaries, is wrong. But it is to say that the burden of identifying, training, and sending out church planters should be on the local church. In the New Testament, it was local churches that identified and sent out men to

³¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Annual Paper Descriptive of The Lord's Work Connected with the Pastors' College: 1877-8," *S&T* (May 1878): 240-62. Cf. Chapter four, 104, n. 362.

³²Cf. Chapter two, 34.

plant churches (cf. Acts. 13:1-3). Spurgeon followed this pattern, as he actively sought men whom he could train and send out for the work of church planting. He said, “Christian labours, (like church planting) disconnected from the church, are like sowing and reaping without having any barn in which to store the fruits of the harvest; they are useful, but incomplete.”³³ Ministries that are not connected to local churches certainly do much good, but Spurgeon believed that they would do more good if they were connected to a local church.

There are three specific things that will help modern churches carry out these two correctives concerning church planting. First, churches (pastors and elders specifically) should be diligent to pray for and identify men who are called and gifted for gospel ministry. Second, churches, no matter the size, should offer initial training and equipping to these men in order to prepare them for further studies at a seminary, or in order to send them directly to the field. And third, as mentioned above, local churches, not agencies, should be the primary sending agents of church planters. Agencies made up of partnering churches can usually do more together than they can separately and are therefore effective and useful. But agencies cannot and should not bear the primary burden of supporting individual church planters. Local churches need to be praying for, holding accountable, funding, and offering tangible help and wisdom to church planters while they are “on the ground” – especially in the early stages of a plant.³⁴ Spurgeon’s ministry models these three things, and thus serves as a corrective for modern churches that are either disengaged from, or looking for guidance in, the exciting work of church planting.

³³C. H. Spurgeon, “How to Meet the Evils of the Age,” in *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1983), 101.

³⁴Spurgeon was personally acquainted with each student who left the College to plant a church. He always kept a close watch on the ministries of his former students, regularly providing updates on many of these ministries in the *S&T*. See e.g., C. H. Spurgeon, *Annual Paper Descriptive of The Lord’s Work Connected with the Pastors’ College: 1877-8* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1878), quoted in *idem.*, *S&T* (1878): 240-62; *idem.*, “Annual Paper Concerning the Lord’s Work in Connection with the Pastors’ College: 1882-83,” *S&T* (May 1883): 267-71.

iv. Commitment to Theological Education and Training

The fourth suggestion for contemporary missions that can be drawn from Spurgeon's ministry is his commitment to theological education and the training of men for gospel ministry. Spurgeon said in 1863 that his "one life's work" was to "preach the Gospel myself, and to train others to do it."³⁵ These two things were the "object and aim" of his life.³⁶ As pointed out in chapter two, Spurgeon believed that the work of the Pastor's College, or the training of men for gospel ministry, was the best type of benevolence ministry. He believed that the instruction and training of young ministers was "superior to all other services done to the Lord and his church,"³⁷ and his conviction was that "there is no better, holier, more useful or more necessary Christian service than assisting to educate young ministers."³⁸

As these quotes indicate, Spurgeon prized theological education and the training of men for gospel ministry, prioritizing it over everything except his own preaching ministry. His love for theological education and his commitment to the training of young men for gospel proclamation went beyond mere words, however. This commitment of Spurgeon's was validated by his generous financial support of the College, as he gave between £600-800 a year towards this work.³⁹ Spurgeon's pocketbook revealed his priorities in ministry.

Spurgeon's commitment to the theological education and training of men for gospel ministry serves as a corrective for the contemporary church in at least two ways. First, his

³⁵G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3 vols. (1894; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 3:61. Cf. Chapter 2, 33-34.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "Report of the Pastors' College: 1881-82," *S&T* (June 1882): 260. Cf. Chapter two, 34.

³⁸C. H. Spurgeon, "A Plea for the Pastor's College," *S&T* (June 1875): 252. Cf. Chapter two, 34.

³⁹Cf. Chapter two, 42.

example encourages churches, pastors, and missionaries to value the theological training and doctrinal formation of men who will labor in preaching and teaching. Spurgeon took doctrine seriously. He believed that good doctrine produced good practice.⁴⁰ Yes, he was committed to teaching Calvinistic doctrine, but his broader commitments were to the non-negotiable aspects of evangelical theology like the inspiration of Scripture, the substitutionary atonement, and salvation by faith in Christ alone. These aspects of evangelical theology, and many others, need to be taught with thoroughness and conviction to those entering gospel ministry in order to equip them to be faithful and fruitful preachers of the gospel.⁴¹

Second, Spurgeon's ministry encourages local churches to carry out their own theological education and training ministry. Of course, most modern churches will not have the resources of Spurgeon and the Tabernacle. But any church and any pastor should be able to teach men who are called to ministry the basic tenets of evangelical theology and to train them in basic ministerial practices. This aspect of discipleship should not be relegated to seminaries but can and should be done by pastors and church leaders.⁴²

Spurgeon's ministry modeled this principle well, as he believed that the Pastor's College, which served as the primary organ through which theological training took place at the Tabernacle, functioned as an integral part of his church. He said, "The College is part and parcel

⁴⁰Cf. Chapter two, 53.

⁴¹David Sills takes this principle a step further and says that missionaries need to implement theological education and training programs for those whom they reach on the mission field in order to train them how to interpret the Word of God accurately so that the church might be strengthened and protected from error. He is greatly concerned with the "de-emphasis of theological education and thorough preparation on the part of mission entities," and he says that the church "must not relegate pastoral training, theological education, and biblical teaching to a level of less important missions activity when they are a primary and necessary means for the fulfilling of the Great Commission." *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 18, 30.

⁴²See Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), for an excellent treatment on this point.

of our Church work.”⁴³ Spurgeon’s vision for the College intentionally fostered close interaction and relationship among students at the College and members of the Tabernacle. He said:

It is a grand assistance to our College that it is connected with an active and vigorous Christian church. If union to such a church does not quicken the student’s spiritual pulse, it is his own fault. It is a serious strain upon a man’s spirituality to be dissociated, during his student-life, from actual Christian work, and from fellowship with more experienced believers. At the Pastors’ College, our brethren can not only meet, as they do every day, for prayer by themselves, but they can unite daily in the prayer-meetings of the church, and can assist in earnest efforts of all sorts. Through living in the midst of a church which, despite its faults, is a truly living, intensely zealous, working organization, they gain enlarged ideas, and form practical habits. Even to see church-management and church-work upon an extensive scale, and to share in the prayers and sympathies of a large community of Christian people, must be a stimulus to right-minded men.⁴⁴

David Bebbington says that the integration of Spurgeon’s College with the life of the Tabernacle was an “unusual feature” of the College.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, not much has changed in contemporary evangelicalism, as the distance between theological education and the local church is as wide as ever. It seems that most evangelical churches place a much greater emphasis on the broad range of social ministries available to them, rather than on the theological education and training of men for gospel ministry. This is evident by the fact that very few churches have theological training programs, while almost all churches of any size have some sort of social ministry. This reality raises the following questions: Why are social ministries seen as more important than theological training in most modern evangelical churches? And is this the best ordering of priorities for such churches? Spurgeon openly advocated the primacy of theological

⁴³C. H. Spurgeon, “Notes,” *S&T* (February 1877): 90.

⁴⁴*C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography: The Full Harvest, 1860-1892* (1973; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 98-99.

⁴⁵David W. Bebbington, “Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education,” in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 226.

training over all other social ministries, and, for the sake of the church's mission, modern evangelical churches would be wise to follow his example.⁴⁶

v. Commitment to Deed Ministry

The fifth suggestion for contemporary missions that can be gathered from Spurgeon's ministry is his commitment to deed ministry. As chapter six argued, Spurgeon was a staunch advocate of those who suffered, which is why he oversaw numerous ministries that addressed the physical needs of hurting people. Commenting on the work of a school for the blind, he said, "Gentleness towards all sufferers is a pressing Christian duty."⁴⁷ Church historian Timothy George points out that Spurgeon's commitment to deed ministry was one of the central hallmarks of his ministry. "It is instructive," he says, "that one of the leading defenders of theological orthodoxy was also one of the leading reformers and advocates of Christian social ministry and action."⁴⁸ Spurgeon should thus be remembered as one who was committed to both theological orthodoxy and social action.

This dissertation has argued that Spurgeon's prioritism did not lead him to undervalue or neglect deed ministries.⁴⁹ Instead, he pursued deed ministries enthusiastically. This dissertation has also argued, however, that he always pursued deed ministries with an eye towards

⁴⁶Kostenberger and O'Brien agree, saying, "...the initial proclamation of the gospel and the winning of converts does not conclude the missionary task. Forming believers into mature Christian congregations, providing theological and pastoral counsel against dangers arising from inside and outside churches...all fall within the scope of what is involved in continuing the mission of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ." Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 268.

⁴⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "An Afternoon in a Blind School," *S&T* (July 1868): 290.

⁴⁸Timothy George, "Forward," in *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), iii.

⁴⁹Cf. Chapter six.

proclaiming the gospel and winning the lost to Christ.⁵⁰ In other words, Spurgeon pursued his benevolent work with the expressed intention of proclaiming the gospel to the poor and needy while also meeting their physical needs.

Spurgeon's ministry therefore serves as a valuable corrective for both holists and prioritists. He challenges holists to rethink their view that word and deed ministries are equal partners in the church's mission, and he challenges prioritists to not neglect the necessary work of addressing physical needs. Modern day missiologists and mission-practitioners have in Spurgeon a model of one who held in biblical tension gospel proclamation and social action, one who explicitly prioritized the former over the latter, and one who celebrated both as good and even necessary pursuits in the mission of the church.

vi. Deed Ministries Focused on Christians, Not Society At Large

The sixth suggestion for contemporary missions that can be drawn from Spurgeon's ministry is that the bulk of his deed ministries were focused on helping Christians, not society at large. This point was also argued for in chapter six, where it was said that Spurgeon favored deed ministries that focused on helping poor Christians, rather than deed ministries that helped the poor in general. This conclusion is supported by the fact that, of all his social ministries, the ones focused on serving the Christian poor had a larger reach. For example, the Book Fund ministry served thousands of poor ministers all over England, whereas the Flower Ministry or the Ladies' Maternal Society, important as they may have been, only served a handful of people in the

⁵⁰David Nelson Duke agrees, saying, "Without question, Spurgeon would not have substituted the social ministries of the Tabernacle for gospel preaching, nor would he have placed them on equal footing with it. He emphasized that the lost must be converted by the proclamation of the gospel. Yet that gospel so preached found its credibility and its completion in the daily social efforts of Spurgeon and the tabernacle." "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Social Concern Exceeding an Individualistic, Self-Help Ideology," *Baptist History and Heritage* 22, no. 4 (October 1987): 50.

neighborhoods around the Tabernacle.

Similarly, the Almshouses, a ministry focused specifically on helping poor Christian widows, received much more attention and support than did Spurgeon's other social ministries. At the celebration of his twenty-fifth anniversary at the Tabernacle, Spurgeon gave £5,000 of the £6,233 gift he received directly to the Almshouses.⁵¹ And although the Pastor's College was a word-based ministry, Spurgeon worked diligently to make sure that the students' physical needs were met.⁵²

Spurgeon believed that meeting the physical needs of ministers was the best type of social ministry. "To help a needy saint," he said, "is altogether a good work, and to relieve a poor servant of God in the ministry is best of all."⁵³ And when discussing the Home Missionary Working Society, a ministry focused on helping poor ministers, he said, "If any needy ones in all the world ought to be relieved, these (i.e. poor ministers) are among the first claimants."⁵⁴ Spurgeon thus prioritized meeting the physical needs of the Christian poor, especially poor ministers, over meeting the physical needs of the poor in general.

Prioritizing social ministries that focus on the Christian poor over those that focus on the general poor is not the norm among modern evangelicals, which is why this aspect of Spurgeon's ministry serves as a corrective for modern-day missions practice.⁵⁵ As noted in chapter one of

⁵¹Cf. Chapter six, 173, n. 652.

⁵²Spurgeon and his wife gave sacrificially to the College, not just to cover the students' tuition, but also so that they would have money to pay their rent and to buy books and clothes. Cf. Chapter two, 62-64.

⁵³C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (July 1875): 344. Cf. Chapter two, 64.

⁵⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "Holy Service on Behalf of Poor Ministers," *S&T* (August 1880): 414. Cf. Chapter six, 177.

⁵⁵Sean Cordell, in his essay "The Gospel and Social Responsibility," is an exception. He says that the church, "in her care for the poor," should begin "with the poor who are believers," and that "if the church loves Christ, then the church must prioritize his bride." *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 102-3.

this dissertation, the vast majority of biblical texts related to social justice are directions for God's people to care for one another, not society at large.⁵⁶ A church's social ministries should reflect the emphasis of the Bible, and should therefore be focused on helping meet the physical needs of God's people, not on meeting needs of people in general.

As chapter six pointed out, Spurgeon supported and oversaw ministries that met the needs of the general poor.⁵⁷ But he understood that the majority of biblical teaching on caring for the poor was focused on God's people caring for one another, not caring for people in general. His ministry thus strikes a more biblical balance in its approach to social ministry, serving as a good model, and as a corrective, for modern churches and mission agencies.

vii. Word and Deed as Partners, Word the Priority

The seventh suggestion for contemporary missions that can be drawn from Spurgeon's ministry is his belief that word and deed ministries should be partners in mission, but that word ministry should be the priority. This aspect of Spurgeon's missiology has been mentioned throughout this dissertation, and several examples will be provided below in order to further illustrate this point. But before these examples are provided, a brief synopsis of three of the most common options concerning the roles that word and deed ministries can have with one another in missions will be given.

1. Three Options Concerning Roles

The church has historically had a difficult time maintaining a proper biblical balance concerning the roles of word and deed in mission. As Duane Litfin says, "Over time the

⁵⁶Cf. Chapter one, 12.

⁵⁷Cf. Chapter six, 179-83.

pendulum has sometimes swung too far in one direction or the other.”⁵⁸ John Stott also makes this point in *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, where he attempts to provide “a more balanced and more biblical way” of defining the roles that word and deed ministry can have in the mission of the church.⁵⁹ According to Stott, there are at least three options concerning the roles that word and deed ministry play in missions: 1) deed as a bridge to word; 2) deed as a consequence of word; and 3) deed and word as partners in mission. Each of these options will now be briefly discussed.

a. Deed as Bridge to Word This view understands social action, or deed ministry, as a means to evangelism. This view, according to Stott, says that “Evangelism and the winning of converts are the primary ends in view, but social action is a useful preliminary, and effective means to these ends.”⁶⁰ According to this view, social action gives the gospel a credibility that it might otherwise lack, while also creating opportunities for evangelism that otherwise might not exist.⁶¹

⁵⁸Duane Litfin, *Word vs. Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21.

⁵⁹John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (1975; repr., Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 25-32.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 41.

⁶¹Stott rightly acknowledges the dangers inherent in this approach, saying that this view makes social work “the sugar on the pill,” or “the bait on the hook.” Stott says that this approach is why “the smell of hypocrisy hangs round our philanthropy.” *Ibid.* Andrew Kirk also provides helpful advice on the danger of using social ministry as a means to evangelism. He says, “If Christians are engaged in works of compassion...it is essential that they do not impose any conditions on the inclusiveness of their activities.” He says that it would of course be “natural” for Christians to express their motivation behind their work, inviting people to respond to the claims of the gospel. But he says that is “entirely different from saying that people can only benefit from their work if they are willing to undergo instruction in the Christian faith.” J. Andrew Kirk, *Mission Under Scrutiny: Confronting Contemporary Challenges* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 94. See Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 37-39, for a good example of a ministry that was designed to create opportunities for evangelism that otherwise might not have existed.

b. Deed as Consequence of Word This view understands social action as a “manifestation” of evangelism.⁶² In this view, “philanthropy is not attached to evangelism rather artificially from the outside, but grows out of it as its natural expression.”⁶³ Stott says that this view finds a strong precedent in the ministry of Jesus, as “his (i.e. Jesus’) words and deeds belonged to each other, the words interpreting the deeds and the deeds embodying the words.”⁶⁴ Timothy Keller also seems to understand the relationship between word and deed in this way. He says, “...the Biblical gospel of Jesus necessarily and powerfully leads to a passion for justice in the world.”⁶⁵ In other words, the gospel (i.e., word ministry) creates people who care about justice (i.e., deed ministry).

c. Deed and Word as Partners This view understands social action and evangelism as partners in Christian missions, with neither one being prioritized over the other. Stott believes that this view provides the biblically balanced approach to word and deed ministry that evangelicals have long struggled to attain. He argues that word and deed ministry “belong to each other and yet are independent of each other,” and that neither social action nor evangelism is a means to the other, or a manifestation of the other.⁶⁶ According to this view, evangelism and social action are each ends in themselves because both are “expressions of unfeigned love.”⁶⁷

⁶²Stott, *Christian Mission*, 42.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid. Despite its strengths, Stott also thinks that this view is deficient, as it “makes service a subdivision of evangelism.” Ibid., 43.

⁶⁵Keller, *Generous Justice*, xiv. Similarly, in another work, he says, “When Christians realize they did not save themselves but were rescued from spiritual poverty, it naturally changes their attitudes toward people who are in economic and physical poverty...Christians renewed by the gospel render sacrificial service to neighbors, the poor, and the community and city around them.” *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 81.

⁶⁶Stott, *Christian Mission*, 43.

2. A Fourth Option

This dissertation would argue that, while Spurgeon's ministry embodied aspects of each of the above options, the last option (Deed and Word as Partners) most accurately portrays Spurgeon's understanding of the roles that word and deed ministry have in missions. But in order to arrive at a more precise understanding of his approach, one major caveat must be added to this last option. While it is true that important aspects of Spurgeon's ministry displayed a close partnership between word and deed ministry (e.g., the Orphanage and the Book Fund Ministry, where Spurgeon sought to meet physical and spiritual needs simultaneously), this partnering of word and deed ministries did not preclude a prioritizing of word over deed ministry.

In Spurgeon's ministry, there was a partnership, or close relationship, between word and deed ministries, but there was also a distinguishing of priorities. Spurgeon valued both types of ministries, but he also believed that word ministry had a logical priority over deed ministry. He would have agreed with Stott's attempt to provide balance to the church's mission, but he would have argued that balance does not prohibit prioritization. His formulation of the roles that word and deed ministry have in missions would have been more akin to Samuel Moffet's statement that gospel proclamation should be the "leading partner" in the partnership between word and deed ministry.⁶⁸

3. Examples from Spurgeon's Ministry

What follows are several examples from Spurgeon's ministry illustrating his belief that

⁶⁷Ibid. This view closely resembles the revisionist holism view discussed in chapter one, 16-17.

⁶⁸Samuel Hugh Moffett, "Evangelism: The Leading Partner," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 575-77.

word and deed ministries should be partners in missions, but that word ministries should take priority. The Loan Tract Society, a ministry that distributed copies of Spurgeon's sermons, was focused on the proclamation of the gospel through the distribution of Spurgeon's sermons, but the distributors did not neglect the physical needs of the families to which they ministered. Early on in the work of the Society, a "sick fund" was established in order to provide relief for "special cases of distress."⁶⁹ Because the distributors in this Society had found "so many cases of poverty and distress in the houses where they called," they inaugurated an official Relief and Sick Fund in 1882.⁷⁰ By 1884, a Mother's Meeting and a Maternal Society had also been developed "as necessary adjuncts to the work" of the Loan Tract Society.⁷¹ Had this effort to relieve the physical needs of those who were suffering not been made, Spurgeon said that "the leaving of a tract would have often seemed almost a mockery."⁷² The primary purpose of this Society was to meet people's spiritual needs by getting the gospel to them in printed form, but the Society did not neglect or ignore people's physical needs. In the Loan Tract Society, therefore, word and deed ministry were partners, but word ministry was the priority.

Another example is found in two missionaries that Spurgeon's College sent out and supported. Dr. Churcher and Mr. Patrick served with the North African Mission in Morocco. They established a hospital where patients received "not only bodily blessing, but daily gospel teaching."⁷³ The focus of their mission was getting the gospel to the "millions in this land...who

⁶⁹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (November 1880): 583.

⁷⁰C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (December 1882): 639.

⁷¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Notes," *S&T* (December 1884): 649.

⁷²Spurgeon, "Notes," (December 1882): 639.

⁷³Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labours of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), 160.

have never heard of Jesus as the only Saviour.”⁷⁴ But the primary means by which they proclaimed the gospel was through the ministry of the hospital, as Dr. Churcher would hold an evangelistic service before he began treating patients.⁷⁵ These missionaries, trained and sent out by Spurgeon, therefore embody Spurgeon’s belief that word and deed are partners in missions, but that word ministry must take the priority.

The Orphanage, as argued in chapter three, perhaps serves as the best example of word and deed as partners in missions with word taking the priority.⁷⁶ Other examples include the Blind Ministry that sought to meet the physical needs of blind people, with their evangelization as the ultimate goal.⁷⁷ Spurgeon also said that the “temporal work” of the deacons at his church, that is, their work to meet people’s physical needs, should have as its ultimate goal the salvation of the lost.⁷⁸

These examples from Spurgeon’s various ministries illustrate his belief that word and deed should be partners in missions, but that word ministry should be the priority. This aspect of his missiology serves as the seventh and final corrective for modern-day missions practice. The three options offered by Stott concerning the roles that word and deed can have in missions (i.e., deed as bridge to word, deed as consequence of word, or deed as partners with word) all seem to have some usefulness. Yet, none of them adequately describe Spurgeon’s approach to missions, much less the New Testament’s teaching on the mission of the church.⁷⁹ Spurgeon recognized

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 161.

⁷⁶Cf. Chapter three, 98.

⁷⁷Cf. Chapter four, 132-34.

⁷⁸Cf. Chapter five, 161.

that deed ministries sometimes provided bridges for word ministry,⁸⁰ and he thought that word and deed should be partners in missions, but he also maintained that gospel proclamation should be the ultimate priority in the church's mission.

b. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Spurgeon's prioritizing of gospel proclamation, his making the aim of conversion explicit, his commitment to international missions and church planting, his commitment to theological education and training, his commitment to deed ministry, his belief that deed ministries should be focused on the Christian poor rather than society at large, and his belief that word and deed ministries are partners in the church's mission with word ministries having the priority are seven aspects of Spurgeon's missiology that contemporary missiologists and mission practitioners would do well to emulate. There are certainly more lessons that could be gleaned from Spurgeon's approach to missions, but this chapter concludes by highlighting these seven, as they seem to capture the essence of Spurgeon's missiology while also addressing several weaknesses in the modern church's approach to missions.

⁷⁹See Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), for a recent treatment on the New Testament's understanding of the church's mission. They conclude that the mission of the church, according to the New Testament, "is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father," 241. Also see Kostenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, for an excellent treatment on the mission of God as revealed in all of Scripture. They conclude, "Our study of the biblical revelation has demonstrated clearly that the divine plan of extending salvation to the ends of the earth is the major thrust of the Scriptures from beginning to end," 262-63.

⁸⁰In a sermon delivered at the Tabernacle in 1871, Spurgeon challenged his congregation to do "all the good you can for [people's] bodies," so that "they may be the more likely to believe in your love towards their souls." C. H. Spurgeon, "Compassion for Souls," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 17 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1971), 81. Similarly, Spurgeon said in another sermon, "I do not think that the Lord expects people to hear the gospel on empty stomachs. I think he likes to see us doing what he used to do. He likes to see them fed; and whether we feed them first, or preach the gospel to them first, they begin to believe in us; and perhaps, after believing in us, they may afterwards believe in the gospel." C. H. Spurgeon, "The Church's Work," in *Speeches By C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad*, ed. G. H. Pike (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 121.

Conclusion

In a day when the church is constantly inundated with issues that she must address as she seeks to engage the surrounding culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ, it becomes necessary for her to regularly refocus and clarify the nature of her mission in the world. Michael Horton contends that the church currently lives in an age of “mission creep” due to her “tendency to expand [her] calling beyond [her] original mandate.”¹ He says that this “mission creep” takes many forms, but it usually means that the Great Commission is expanded to “include a host of enterprises that Christ did not mandate.”² These “enterprises” surely exist and work to do good things in Jesus’ name, but they usually, Horton argues, concentrate on things that Jesus has not explicitly mandated at the expense of things that he has explicitly mandated like gospel proclamation and disciple making.

In a word, in the contemporary setting, it is more socially acceptable to pursue social ministries rather than proclaim the gospel. Social ministries are necessarily less offensive than presenting the claims of the gospel, and thus are more readily embraced by many churches and Christians. Of course, as this dissertation has pointed out, social ministries are a necessary part of the church’s work in the world. But when they are pursued as an end in themselves, without any explicit intention of proclaiming the gospel to those who are helped, they fail to achieve the essence of the church’s mission.

In an effort to slow the “mission creep” of the church and in order to restate precisely what the mission of the church is, this dissertation has employed Charles Spurgeon’s approach to

¹Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God’s Strategy for Making Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 16.

²Ibid.

missions to call the church back to the biblical priority of gospel proclamation. The overemphasis on holistic missions and social action in contemporary evangelical churches needs the corrective that Spurgeon's approach can provide.

Spurgeon's approach to missions also serves as an indictment to those who focus exclusively on word ministry, at the expense of deed ministry, calling them to a more balanced ministry that works to extend mercy to people by meeting their physical needs. Overly zealous prioritists can benefit from an examination of Spurgeon's benevolent prioritism, in which he enthusiastically engaged the social concerns of his day while not relinquishing his commitment to the priority of gospel proclamation.

Spurgeon worked tirelessly to help make London a better place; he was for his city. However, social initiatives took a place of secondary importance in his missiology, and he made it abundantly clear that the proclamation of the gospel was the priority in the church's mission. Spurgeon's missiology, therefore, is best characterized as word rather than deed oriented, prioritistic rather than holistic, and representational rather than incarnational.

There are several areas of further research that this dissertation would like to suggest. First, would Spurgeon's approach to missions (i.e., prioritism) be feasible today in restricted access countries? In other words, would his approach be wise, or even possible, in closed countries where it is illegal to preach the gospel? Or would his approach do more harm than good in those types of places?

Another area deserving of more research is the strategy, or lack thereof, that Spurgeon employed when sending out church planters. Did he have a strategy for church planting, or did he simply send men wherever they wanted to plant? Research on the ministries of the dozens of men that Spurgeon sent out to plant churches would also be useful, specifically regarding how

they related to the Baptist Union during the Downgrade Controversy. Several of these men stayed in the liberal-leaning Union when Spurgeon was removed due to his more conservative theology, so it would be interesting to see if their drift away from conservative theology effected their ministries as pastors and church planters.

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