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**THE THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY**  
**IN THE THOUGHT OF**  
**CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON**

**DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY**

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## INTRODUCTION

This research aims to identify whether Spurgeon's published writings reveal a developed and coherent vision of the theology of ministry. To this end, we will use a three-dimensional model promoted by Paul Fiddes, who considers that ministry has three distinct and complementary dimensions: individual, collegial and communal. In Fiddes' conception, individual ministry concerns those with special tasks or powers, collegial ministry concerns those who make up the team of people with special tasks, while community ministry concerns those who make up the community of believers.<sup>1</sup> As Daniel G. Oprean observes, this three-dimensional view is relevant to Romanian evangelical communities, where the tendency is for individual ministry to be the only dimension represented, leading to an increasingly evident separation between clergy and laity, although evangelical denominations affirm the priesthood of all believers and firmly reject clericalism.<sup>2</sup>

Given this three-dimensional model, we consider its usefulness to be all the more evident since, even though the three dimensions are explained separately, none of them is given a more prominent position. On the contrary, this model also explains how, when put together, these components provide a complete picture of ministry. As John A. Coleman observed, in the Church every ministry is a limited service given to the body of Christ, which, although it contains a variety of gifts of ministry, none of them contains or exhausts the fullness of ministry. Furthermore, he also states that although the gifts are diverse, they become complementary and unified only through the Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup> In turn, Yves Congar states that it is not only ordained ministers who are active in the work of building up the Church. Rather, ordained and non-ordained ministries work in complementarity and through ongoing or occasional, expected or unexpected activities, one can witness all kinds of works in which ministers raised up by the Spirit are used, whether they are formally invested by the community or not.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology. Studies in Baptist History and Thought*, Eugene, Wipf and Stock, 2007, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel G. Oprean, *Theology of Participation: A Conversation of Traditions*, Carlisle, Langham Monographs, 2019, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> John A. Coleman, "A Theology of Ministry," in *The Way*, 25/1 Jan. 1985, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Yves Congar, *Ministres et communion ecclesiale*, Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 1971, p. 19.

Regarding the relationship between the theology of ministry and the great doctrines of the Christian faith, Thomas O'Meara argued that the theology of ministry has its roots in the theology that reflects on the church and in the theology of grace.<sup>5</sup> John A. Coleman added pneumatology to this list.<sup>6</sup> Craig M. Watts, in turn, proposed approaching the theology of ministry in relation to revelation, Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.<sup>7</sup> However, whatever doctrines should be investigated, the research will explore in particular the practical side of these doctrines, in order to highlight as clearly as possible the usefulness of the information contained in these doctrines in the public or hidden ministry of the pastor, the ministry team and each member of the church.

### **Stages of Doctoral Research**

In the first part of this doctoral research, we will consider a brief analysis of Spurgeon's life, theology, and ministry. To begin with, we will investigate most of the events in his life that are considered relevant to our study. Through this investigation, we aim to identify how his childhood and adolescent education, as well as his life experiences shaped his theology and practice of ministry. Also, in this analysis, we will take a brief look at his theology as a whole, in order to better contextualise his theology of ministry and to discover, to a certain extent, the factors that shaped his theological beliefs. Then we will focus on his pastoral work, looking at how Spurgeon was formed as a minister, but also how his ministry can be described in the most important stages of his life. We believe that this insight into his life, theology and ministry can better explain how he practised what he believed, but also the reasons why he resorted to such a practice.

In the second part of this doctoral research, the analysis will examine the broader context of Spurgeon's era, with an emphasis on the theology of ministry in the nonconformist movements in the geographical and historical space of Spurgeon's time. After a brief inventory and description of these nonconformist denominations, we will analyse their theological framework of ministry. This will be done separately, both from an individual point of view and from a collegial and community point of view, with the aim of presenting the theological thinking of the English Victorian Nonconformists. We consider this approach necessary in order to be able to later contextualise Spurgeon's theology of

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, New Jersey, Paulist Press, 1983, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Coleman, "A Theology of Ministry," pp. 7–8.

<sup>7</sup> Craig M. Watts, "Christian Ministry in its Theological Context" in *Themelios* vol. 6, Iss. 3, April 1981, p. 20.

ministry appropriately, having an overview of the general framework of his era regarding this subject. In addition, we hope that, following this analysis, we will be able to observe how his theology of ministry was shaped, but also how it differed from the theology of other nonconformist traditions.

In the third part, we will focus on his own theology of ministry, using the proposed three-dimensional model. In researching Spurgeon's theology of individual ministry, we will pay particular attention to his theology of pastoral ministry, focusing both on elements related to how pastors were identified and installed, as well as on elements related to their actual ministry. We will pay particular attention to those qualities and skills that Spurgeon considered relevant to lasting and proper pastoral ministry. With regard to his theology of collegial ministry, we will consider how he thought the church leadership team should be composed, as well as how relationships among its members should be conducted. With regard to his theology of community ministry, we will investigate how he thought the ministry of church members should unfold, both in terms of the activities carried out and organised through the church or its leaders, and in terms of the actions that each member should undertake personally, both within the community of believers and outside it.

At the end of this research, we wish to present Spurgeon's theology of ministry, highlighting how developed and coherent his vision was. Specifically, we want to present his vision of the theology of individual, collegial, and community ministry in order to make it accessible and transferable for future research that aims to deepen the theology of ministry in general or other dimensions of Spurgeon's theology.

### **Limitations of the Research and Data Analysed**

For the first part of the research, we will mainly look at Spurgeon's autobiography, put together by his wife and personal secretary, as well as other relevant biographies written shortly after his death. In addition, we will also analyse contemporary studies of his life in order to gain a broad picture of how he was received both by his contemporaries and by contemporary researchers. However, the analysis will be conducted in general terms and will not cover all the elements that can be taken into account in the study of Spurgeon's life, theology and ministry. The reason we will limit ourselves to the basic elements is that the ultimate goal of the doctoral research is to analyse the theology of ministry in Spurgeon's thinking and not to analyse his entire life or all the theological concepts that he



preached or supported. Therefore, this research will be limited to the basic elements that describe key moments in his life, the doctrines he fervently supported and believed in most, and a large part of his ministry, spanning a period of approximately forty years (taking into account the year he was installed as pastor in Waterbeach as the starting point).

As for the second part of the doctoral research, the confessions that formed the body of Victorian Nonconformity will be analysed schematically and in a partially arbitrary order. Through these descriptions, we aim to identify some statistical indicators and some of their confessional characteristics specific to that historical period. The role of these descriptions will be to prepare the framework for investigating the theology of ministry among the entire body of Nonconformists, but also to explain why there were differences in the practice and theory of ministry. Therefore, the descriptions will not be exhaustive, but will focus on those characteristics that can influence the articulation of a theology of ministry, looking at how it varied from one denomination to another. In addition, in identifying these milestones, the thinking of the Nonconformists will be analysed both through the lens of existing studies in the field and through the lens of documents, sermons and confessions of faith issued or published during that period or relating to those times. The researchers of the period that this study will focus on are: David W. Bebbington, Timothy Larsen, David M. Thompson, Alan P. F. Sell, Ian Sellers and Michael R. Watts. The book most frequently used in the analysis of that period will be the anthology of Nonconformist texts from the 19th century, edited by David W. Bebbington, together with Kenneth Dix and Alan Ruston<sup>8</sup>. Through this volume, we will examine statements of faith issued during that period, sermons or speeches by some of the leaders and theologians of the time, as well as other statistical documents relating to those times.

As for the third part of the doctoral research, in identifying Spurgeon's theology regarding ministry, we will limit ourselves to describing the main milestones that can define his theology in this area. Although we will make use of many of his references to the topic under study, for reasons of space we will not mention them all. Consequently, although we will use all his writings (including his most recently published volumes of sermons), we will highlight only the most obvious and frequently encountered elements in his sermons or writings. Furthermore, in doing so, we will strictly limit ourselves to his

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<sup>8</sup> David W. Bebbington, Kenneth Dix, Alan Ruston (eds.), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts, vol. III: The Nineteenth Century*, Eugene, Wipf & Stock, 2015.

views on the theology of individual, collegial or community ministry, avoiding other references related to this topic. In addition, in analysing his theology of ministry, we will take into account the magazine he edited, using it specifically when examining how Spurgeon organised his ministry in his own church or when articles written by him and dealing with topics specific to the theology of ministry were published in its pages.

As for the researchers who have examined Spurgeon and with whom we will engage in dialogue, we will generally concentrate on those whose research has been conducted in the last four decades.

### **Working Methodology**

As Christian T. George observes, although Spurgeon did not choose to present his theology systematically - and we do not find an organised description of his theological concepts in his writings - he nevertheless produced theology organically.<sup>9</sup> And although Spurgeon is viewed with reservation as a theologian by some researchers, mainly because his primary ministry was preaching, revising sermons, and preparing lectures for his students,<sup>10</sup> his writings and the skills he demonstrated throughout his ministry illustrate nonetheless that he took personal responsibility for his own theological training. And although he did not receive formal theological training (even though he desired it), his sermons demonstrate a thorough theology acquired through his possession of an adequate library.<sup>11</sup> In addition, he was fluent in Hebrew and Greek, had a thorough knowledge of French, Latin and partially in German.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, at the time of his death, his personal library contained approximately 12,000 volumes, not including those donated to the college library for pastors.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Spurgeon is said to have read three to five books a week.<sup>14</sup> However, the gap left by the lack of a well-structured organization of his theological beliefs is partly filled today by the various republications of his writings, which are grouped appropriately according to different themes or biblical doctrines.

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<sup>9</sup> Christian T. George, *Jesus Christ, The 'Prince of Pilgrims': a Critical Analysis of the Ontological, Functional, and Exegetical Christologies in the Sermons, Writings, and Lectures of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)*, A Thesis for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, St. Andrews, University of St. Andrews, 2011, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*, p. 34-35.

<sup>11</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Fullerton, C. H. *Spurgeon: A Biography*, p. 285-286.

<sup>14</sup> Michael, *Spurgeon*, p. 22 și Earls, *Spurgeon's Theology*, p. 105..

On the other hand, Spurgeon conveyed his theology in a language accessible to the listeners and readers of his era. Thus, he used a dynamic theology, which was in line with the reforming impulses of his time, but he postulated an ultra-dynamic theology in his experimental and extremely personal language.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, for a good interpretation of his theology, we will consider the correct analysis of his language, avoiding the linguistic and theological instabilities that may arise from a superficial interpretation. In addition, to ensure that his expression is not understood merely at a popular level, his rhetoric must be perceived beyond the literal form of his words, which are often colloquial.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the investigation of its allegorical implications must be done in such a way that the concept it presents is not distorted. For this reason, as Christian T. George observes, close attention must be paid to his native and allegorical hermeneutics, which are often quite fluid,<sup>17</sup> especially since some existing studies place his theology and rhetoric as belonging to Puritanism and Reformed theology.<sup>18</sup>

The methodology used to conduct the research in this thesis is textual analysis, specific to the humanities, which has three fundamental aspects: descriptive, analytical, and critical. Regarding the descriptive methodology, the first part of the research will consist of examining primary sources that describe his life, theology, and ministry. The four autobiographical volumes will be examined with a focus on those elements responsible for his formation as a person, his theological formation, and the scope of his ministry. By using these concepts, we will form our perspective on Spurgeon as a person. In the part dedicated to examining his theology of ministry, we will mainly use his volumes of sermons and articles on ministry found in *The Sword and Trowel* magazine, as they contain many references to concepts specific to ministry. Using these concepts separately, we will form our overall perspective on Spurgeon's theology of individual, collegial and community ministry.

As part of the analytical methodology, in the first part of our research, we will use some of the biographies written by those close to him or by those who had access to a large amount of primary sources related to his life. In addition, we will take into account the analyses of Spurgeon's contemporary researchers, looking at how they explain his formation as a theologian and church minister. We will also analyse other concepts related

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<sup>15</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*, p. 16,

<sup>16</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Bacon, *Spurgeon*, p. 77.

to the role that education played in his ministry as a pastor or the role of his own experiences in shaping his theological beliefs. By examining these concepts related to his life, theology, and ministry, we will be able to form a perspective on how Spurgeon is viewed as a person.

As for the second part of the research, we will analyse the writings of David. W. Bebbington<sup>19</sup>, Timothy Larsen<sup>20</sup>, David M. Thompson<sup>21</sup>, Alan P. F. Sell<sup>22</sup>, Ian Sellers<sup>23</sup> and Michael R. Watts<sup>24</sup>, to identify the main distinguishing characteristics of the English Victorian Nonconformists, but also what elements they considered essential in defining individual, collegial or community ministry. In the third part of the research, we will examine, in contemporary research on Spurgeon's theology and ministry, how these scholars describe his vision of the theology of individual, collegial, and community ministry.

From a critical analysis perspective, in the first part, the thesis will contain some assessments of how the connections between Spurgeon and those who wrote about him can be evaluated. Thus, in constructing the scientific argument, we will use Patricia S. Kruppa's book, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress*<sup>25</sup>, to show how different the conclusions about Spurgeon's identity are when his life, theology and ministry are viewed from a perspective different from that of his admirers'. Another source used to construct the scientific argument will be Tom J. Nettles' work, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life*

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<sup>19</sup> David W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*. Eugene, Wipf & Stock, 2011; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London, Routledge, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen (eds.), *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations*, London, Sheffield Academic Press, 2003; Larsen, Michael Ledger-Lomas (eds.), *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017; Larsen, Timothy, *A People of One Book: The Bible And The Victorians*, Oxford, Oxford, University Press, 2012; Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology*, Waco, Baylor University Press, 2004. Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality: Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England (Studies in Modern British Religious History)*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer Inc, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> David M. Thompson (ed.), *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Alan P. F. Sell, *The Theological Education of the Ministry - Soundings in the British Reformed and Dissenting Traditions*, Eugene, Pickwick Publications, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Allan P. F. Sell, David J. Hall, Ian Sellers (eds.), *Protestant Nonconformist Texts, vol. II – The Eighteenth Century*, Eugene, Wipf & Stock, 2015; Sellers, *Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity*. London, Edward Arnold, 1977.

<sup>24</sup> Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume I, From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978; Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II, The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, Oxford, Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1995.

<sup>25</sup> Patricia Stallings Kruppa, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preachers Progress*, London, Routledge, 2018.

and *Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*<sup>26</sup>. We will use this source to obtain some essential milestones related to his biography in order to outline an adequate picture of his specific theological tendencies and to understand his pastoral theology.

Another book on which we will base our scientific argument will be Geoffrey Chang's, *Spurgeon the Pastor: Recovering a Biblical and Theological Vision for Ministry*<sup>27</sup>, which will help us clearly define his perspective on the role of preaching in church life, the way he organised worship services, the role of church membership, and the way he managed his relationship with his members. Another study we will use is Christian T. George's *Jesus Christ, The 'Prince of Pilgrims': a Critical Analysis of the Ontological, Functional, and Exegetical Christologies in the Sermons, Writings, and Lectures of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)*<sup>28</sup>, which will help us understand how Spurgeon should be approached as a theologian and, especially, how the language in which he wrote his theology should be interpreted.

Therefore, in order to achieve this, at each stage of the research, the objectives pursued and the bibliographic sources investigated will vary greatly. Thus, in the first part of the analysis, in which we will examine the person of Spurgeon, we will do this both through the prism of his life and through the prism of his theology and ministry. More specifically, with regard to his life, we will draw on his autobiography and other relevant biographies, emphasizing the most significant events that shaped his theology and ministry. Given the large number of biographies (most of them hagiographic), we will specifically select those relevant biographies that are also recommended by other researchers. We will analyse his life based on a model that reveals at least three distinct stages. We will consider the first stage to be the one in which he prepared to write his theology of ministry and, implicitly, for the ministry he carried out; the second stage will correspond to his ministry at Waterbeach and especially in London, and the last stage will be considered to be the one in which he became involved in the most significant controversy of his life, the so-called *Downgrade Controversy*. This model of analysis of his life is very similar to that proposed by researcher Iain H. Murray.

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<sup>26</sup> Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, Ross-shire, Mentor, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey Chang, *Spurgeon the Pastor: Recovering a Biblical and Theological Vision for Ministry*, Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> George, *Jesus Christ*.

We will investigate Spurgeon's theology based on the information found in his sermons and writings, including articles published in *The Sword and Trowel* magazine, which he edited throughout his life. First, we will focus our attention on identifying the main factors that shaped his theological journey, trying to find out who influenced him and to what extent these influences shaped his theological thinking. Then, we will pay attention to Spurgeon's interpretation of the main biblical doctrines, because we want his theology of ministry to be easier to understand, since we will be considering his entire theological creed. Here we will also try to determine what his favorite theological themes were and why Spurgeon paid so much attention to them, thus trying to capture how his theology differed from that of his contemporaries.

We will investigate Spurgeon's ministry by analysing the information presented in his autobiography, as well as in other accounts that document or examine it. Accordingly, we will provide both a brief description of his main activities and a chronological list of them. However, we will focus primarily on the formative factors, looking at how his life experiences, the people he interacted with and the materials he had access to were responsible for shaping him as a church minister and, in particular, as a pastor. We will not provide a detailed presentation of all his ministry activities, but rather we will try to capture their scope. In addition, we will address his main qualities and skills, which were responsible for such a vast ministry. By identifying these abilities and character traits, we want to highlight how his ministry progressed, but also how his ministry suffered from his inconsistency or failure to use them.

In the second part of the research, we will consider the broader theological framework of his time, focusing on the theology of ministry among the English Victorian Nonconformists, a category to which Spurgeon himself belonged from birth to death. To this end, we will analyse several representative volumes and, in particular, collections of nonconformist texts edited by researchers of that period from the wealth of information describing this period. First, we will present a brief description of these denominations and how they were formed, attempting to capture some of their specific characteristics. The description of these features will not be exhaustive, nor will we focus on the most important characteristics, but rather we will seek to observe those characteristics that are relevant to investigating the theology of ministry in their view.

After that, we will investigate what their individual theology of ministry was, seeking to observe how different denominations or Nonconformist groups chose their pastors, invested them in ministry, and assigned them responsibilities. Here, we will also try to find out what expectations they had of them, especially with regard to preaching. We will also be interested in how the transmission of Scripture to the ends of the earth was approached. Additionally we will briefly discuss the skills they considered necessary for good church leadership.

We will then examine the collegial and communal ministry of the English Victorian Nonconformists in a separate chapter. Regarding their conception of collegial ministry, we will investigate the main forms of organisation of collegial ministry found among the English Victorian Nonconformists, but also how they succeeded or failed to maintain an adequate balance between the different types of ministry. Given the differences between the models of organisation of the church leadership team, the analysis will take into account the most representative models and will examine how the disagreements that arose between pastors or their representatives and the other members of the leadership were resolved. Here we will examine how church leaders were permitted to utilise the financial resources of the members, especially when they were not allowed to engage in secular income-generating activities. Another tension analysed will concern the Nonconformists' view of women's public ministry through preaching or church leadership.

Regarding the theology of community service, we will investigate how Victorian English Nonconformists understood that they had to serve within the church and how they managed to do so. After that, we will follow their ministry outside the confines of religious chapels, trying to understand how they felt they should be active in society, get involved in various forms of social injustice, take measures to curb evil, or spread their own religious beliefs.

In the third part of the research, we will focus on Spurgeon's understanding of the theology of ministry, following the same dimensions of ministry. Therefore, we will first focus on individual ministry, looking at how he proposed that the pastor's investment and ministry should be carried out. Then we will investigate collegial and community ministry, showing how the leadership team was conceived and organised, so that we can finally analyse the ministry carried out by church members, both inside and outside the chapels. To do this, we will explore his vision, considering all of his writings. Thus, we will try to

identify all the clues related to our theme, group them, and put them together to obtain as complete a picture as possible of Spurgeon's theology of ministry, building it on the basis of this three-dimensional model. At the same time, we will refer to other reference works, especially the research of Geoffrey Chang and Tom J. Nettles, to see what conclusions those who have investigated fragments of his theology of ministry have reached.

Therefore, with regard to the theology of individual ministry, we will analyse how Spurgeon believed that a person enabled by God to serve in such a church office should be sought and identified. Given that the task of identifying and recognising those suitable for pastoral ministry fell to the church, we will seek to discover the guiding principles that Spurgeon proposed for the successful completion of this selection. We will also seek to establish how he believed the investiture into ministry should be done and, above all, what the main expectations should be of a pastor in his work for the benefit of the church members. Then, we will analyse the pastor's ministry in terms of exercising leadership in the church, trying to find out how Spurgeon thought it should be carried out and what parameters a pastor of the church was allowed to use in exercising his authority. Listing these, the role of formal and informal education, as well as the passion and transparency that the pastor had to demonstrate, will be some of the other elements examined in this stage of the study.

Then we will investigate separately the pastor's ministry through preaching, a ministry in which Spurgeon himself excelled. We will seek to find out what characteristics he considered necessary for someone who wanted to successfully carry out this type of ministry, but also how it should be manifested, both in relation to God and to the church community. In this way, we want to see how he should invoke God's help, but at the same time take into account the level and needs of his listeners. We will also be interested in what methods he proposed for conveying the biblical message, what themes he considered necessary for a thorough and solid transmission of biblical truths, and what role the Holy Spirit played in accompanying the messenger and the listeners.

Then we will analyse how Spurgeon suggested meeting the financial needs of those involved in pastoral ministry, trying to observe what his arguments were for their unconditional support. Here we will also look at how he saw this type of support as possible. After that, we will briefly analyse his view on the involvement of women in



pastoral ministry. We will look at whether he allowed them access to preaching or pastoring and what his arguments were for allowing or rejecting their involvement.

After that, we will analyse Spurgeon's perspective on collegial theology, focusing on how he thought ministry tasks should be divided within the leadership team, but also on the proposed method for good relationships between different types of ministers. In addition, we will seek to find out what categories of ministers he proposed and implemented in his own church and how he thought the pastor should relate to them, especially since during Spurgeon's lifetime there was generally a peaceful climate within his ministry in London.

Regarding community service, we will investigate the importance Spurgeon placed on the involvement of every member of the church, as well as his proposed way of identifying and exercising the abilities God has given to every believer in the church. We will then focus on the role that membership played in the proper and complete exercise of community service. Additionally, we will explore how Spurgeon believed church members should be involved in activities undertaken during chapel worship services or other religious activities intended for their spiritual growth. The way in which community service was organised and developed in his own church will also be investigated, seeking to understand what methods they used and proposed to support the pastor, the leadership team, or other departments in the church. We will then focus on community ministry directed toward those who were not part of the community of believers, looking at both the activities aimed at spreading the message of the Gospel to the unconcerned or unconverted and the way in which Spurgeon and his church were involved in social and philanthropic activities for the helpless and needy.

### **Justification for Choosing the Topic (Expected Impact on the Development of the Field of Knowledge and Original Contribution to the Field of Research)**

We believe that a major contribution to the field of knowledge is to fill a gap in the analysis of Spurgeon's theology and ministry. As shown above, no academic works focusing on his theology of ministry and using the three-dimensional model have been identified in the mainstream publications. The lack of academic works investigating Spurgeon's pastoral theology was also noted by Geoffrey Chang, who stated that although there is no better model of faithful pastoral ministry and dedication to the local church than

Spurgeon's,<sup>29</sup> his pastoral ministry and ecclesiology have been largely neglected by those interested in analysing the dimensions of his theology and ministry. This conclusion led Chang to state that Iain H. Murray's words can also be applied in this area, namely that Spurgeon has been forgotten<sup>30</sup> and that he should not only be known as a preacher, but also as a pastor dedicated to his ministry.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, although his theology of ministry has been investigated partially and fragmentarily in other studies on his life, theology, and ministry, we consider that approaching his theology of ministry through the use of the three dimensions (individual, collegial, and collective) represents an original contribution to the field of research. In addition to those who have analysed his ministry through preaching, social involvement, church planting or other dimensions of his vast ministry, we consider the most relevant studies for the analysis of his theology of ministry to be those of Nettles<sup>32</sup> and Chang<sup>33</sup>. However, although these researchers have analysed his pastoral theology more closely, they still do not fully capture the dimensions of his vision of ministry as they will be captured using the three-dimensional model mentioned above.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the two works do not exhaust the subject of this research, but rather offer some clues that I intend to develop and deepen through this study.

We consider that another contribution to the field of knowledge is to fill a gap in the specialised literature produced in our country and available in Romanian regarding the knowledge and exploration of Spurgeon's theology and ministry. The only research on Spurgeon's theological thinking available in Romanian and conducted in our country is that of Marius Vasile Govor, who explores his theological thinking about the family.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Chang, *Păstorul Spurgeon – redescoperire unei viziuni biblice și teologice pentru slujire*, Oradea, Editura Psalmi Cântați, 2024, p. 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> The expression used by Iain H. Murray is "The Forgotten Spurgeon" and can be found in the title of his book *The Forgotten Spurgeon*.

<sup>31</sup> Chang, *Spurgeon the Pastor*, p. 2-4.

<sup>32</sup> Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*.

<sup>33</sup> Chang, *Spurgeon the Pastor*.

<sup>34</sup> Joe B. Kim, „Reviewed at Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*” in *Themelios*, Vol. 39, Issue 2, July 2014, p. 346-347. Specifically, Tom Nettles chose to argue that Spurgeon possessed a developed and coherent pastoral theology, offering a balanced view of Spurgeon: as a preacher, as a public figure, and as a human being. However, the book leans toward an extensive biography, in which the author supports Spurgeon's theological tendencies with examples from his life and ministry. As for Geoffrey Chang, he analyzed Spurgeon as a church pastor, focusing on his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, including interactions with specific membership rules and other aspects of church leadership.

<sup>35</sup> Marius Vasile Govor, *Familia în gândirea teologică a lui Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, Teză de doctorat, Cluj-Napoca, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, 2017.

Apart from this work, only a few of Spurgeon's many biographies are available in Romanian, and only a small part of his writings have been translated.<sup>36</sup>

Although his name is generally known within evangelical communities in our country, few have in-depth knowledge of the broad dimensions of his life, theology and ministry. Thus, through this research, we aim to present Romanian-speaking readers with a comprehensive study of his theology of ministry, which will open up the possibility for them to gain a much deeper and more adequate knowledge of Spurgeon's person and theology.

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<sup>36</sup> In addition to those already translated, at the end of 2024, Geoffrey Chang's book was translated into Romanian and printed, *Păstorul Spurgeon – redescoperire unei viziuni biblice și teologice pentru slujire*, Oradea, Editura Psalmi Cântați, 2024.