

Notes (From the March 1888 Sword and Trowel)

by C.H. Spurgeon

The Down-Grade controversy highlights the importance of standing firm against the new theology and upholding the old faith.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:3

Topics: "Controversy", "Faithfulness to the Gospel"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon addresses the ongoing 'Down-Grade' controversy, emphasizing the need for vigilance against heresies such as post-mortem salvation and purgatory, which are openly acknowledged. He calls for churches and ministers who uphold the old faith to take action against the rising errors, while expressing concern over the Baptist Union's lack of a Scriptural foundation. Spurgeon stresses the importance of clear and honest communication in theological discussions, urging unity among believers and support for those in need. He expresses hope that the conflict will strengthen the resolve of faithful ministers and lead to genuine revival among congregations. Ultimately, Spurgeon encourages a return to heartfelt preaching of the gospel as a remedy for the current challenges.

Transcript

THE "Down-Grade" controversy rages, and so it ought to do; for every one who follows it will see how every week the evil which we pointed out is more and more manifest. We have directed special attention to the post-mortem salvation and purgatory heresies, because the existence of these needs no proof, for they are openly avowed; but other errors are also rife enough, and if any of the great truths of the gospel were set in a central light, and inquiry directed to the way in which they are preached, very singular discoveries would be made. It is quite enough for any one to tackle one error at a time, and especially when it is one which is a sort of corner-stone of the new theology. How the holders of the fine new nothing rage when they see their thing of darkness laid bare in the sunlight! Let any one read their utterances, and observe for himself how greatly secrecy was desired until the people should be educated up to the new dogmas. Alas, that work has been already done all too well! It was time that some one spoke.

So far as we can judge, there is no likelihood whatever that the Baptist Union will obtain a Scriptural basis. We are writing before the meeting of its Council, but we are greatly afraid that we shall not have the pleasure of being disappointed. This matter should be taken up by those churches and ministers that

remain true to the old faith. There are many such, but nothing will be done unless they bestir themselves; even then a long struggle is before them, and none can prophesy how it will end.

Some of our readers may not see The Baptist newspaper. If they are Baptists, they ought to take it in. But our many other friends may like to see a letter which we sent to that paper.

"To the Editor of the BAPTIST.

"DEAR SIR,--I am very anxious to remove all personal grievances out of the present struggle, and, as I see that my remarks upon the action of the Council have been supposed to apply to Dr. Culross, I hasten to say that he is the last man upon whom I would direct an attack, even in self-defense. I did not suspect him, or any other person, of playing a double part personally. I merely intended to review the Council's action as a whole, and I think it is open, fairly open, to my strictures.

Men do in a body what no one of them would do by himself alone. A committee is a many-headed, many-tongued thing, and its action is apt to be the result of internal compromise, or of momentary impetuosity, rather than of quiet, sober thought. In fact, there is no accounting for what may come out of the lucubrations of a hundred men. I wish, therefore, to view the Council as a whole, and not in its individual members; and to feel in my heart of hearts that I excuse each one while I yet criticize the whole.

This may not be logical, but it expresses what I feel. "If Dr. Culross ever needs a champion to defend his guileless character, I would volunteer my best services. "I must, however, protest against anyone saying that he believes orthodox doctrines, 'but not in Mr. Spurgeon's sense.' I believe these doctrines, so far as I know, in the common and usual sense attached to them by the general usage of Christendom. Theological terms ought to be understood and used only in their general and usual meaning.

If I have any crotchets, or attach exaggerated meanings to these terms, I do not desire any living soul to be bound by my eccentricities. It is not Spurgeon's sense, or John Smith's sense, but the common and accepted meaning, which should be understood by doctrinal expressions. "Whatever the Council does, let it above all things avoid the use of language which could legitimately have two meanings contrary to each other. Let us be plain and outspoken. There are grave differences--let them be avowed honestly.

Why should any man be ashamed to do so? Policy must not be our guide, nor the wish to retain this party or that. Right is safe, and compromise by the use of double meanings can never in the long run be wise. "I have no desire to say anything upon the bearings of the controversy upon myself personally. I shall survive the severest censures of individuals or Councils; but let us go on to the real points at issue without more ado. Is the Baptist denomination on the old lines or on the new?

It cannot, as a whole, run upon both. "One thing more. I entreat my friends not to let our poorer brethren suffer in the matter of the Augmentation Fund. I told Dr. Booth that I should give the same amount as before, and that I would let him know to whom I gave grants on the same lines as the Union has done. Too few of our wealthy brethren have helped in this matter. I wish my personal friends, who are able to do so, would each select some needy pastor, and look after him, giving at least the usual £10 if his church would raise £10 more.

When we are all of one faith, and our union becomes more real, I trust there will be heartier efforts in this direction. Whether in the Union or out of it, I shall never cease to honor and aid those who endure so much hardness for our Lord's sake, and so richly deserve our practical sympathy. "Yours very heartily, "C. H.

SPURGEON."

The evil leaven has affected some few of the men who were educated in our College; and in our attempting to remove them from our Association, they have naturally found sympathizers, and this has been the sorest wound of all. Nevertheless, we have been greatly cheered by the loving enthusiasm of the faithful and thorough brethren who make up the great bulk of the host. Many will be all the better for the bracing up which the conflict has induced; and as a band of men we shall march on with all the greater and clearer confidence in God. Oh, that the College and its men may be a great breakwater, firmly resisting the incoming flood of falsehood!

We rejoice that, in several instances, ministers have written to say that the "Down Grade" papers recalled them to more hearty preaching of the gospel, and aroused their people to more prayer, and the consequence has been a deep and true revival. One or two of these cases are very striking, and are no mere imagination, for they are attested both by the ministers and their new converts.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/notes-from-the-march-1888-sword-and-trowel/>

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