

**THE DOWN GRADE
CONTROVERSY**

by Charles Spurgeon

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THE “DOWN GRADE” CONTROVERSY FROM MR. SPURGEON’S STANDPOINT
(FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, VOL. IV)

PREFACE.

WHEN the reader receives this number of the magazine, the Editor hopes to be traveling along the Corniche Road, which in some places winds its wondrous way far above the sea. One gazes down from above, and draws his breath. During the past year we have often had to look down from the royal road of the truth upon those craggy paths which others have chosen, which we fear will lead them to destruction. We have had enough of *The Down-Grade* for ourselves when we have looked down upon it. What havoc false doctrine is making no tongue can tell. Assuredly the New Theology can do no good towards God or man; it, has no adaptation for it. If it were preached for a thousand years by all the most earnest men of the school, it would never renew a soul, nor overcome pride in a single human heart. We look down into the abyss of error, and it almost makes our head swim to think of the perilous descent; but the road of the gospel, to which we hope to keep by divine grace, is a safe and happy way. Oh, that all would travel it! Oh, that our earnest pleadings, which have brought upon our devoted head so much of obloquy, would recall the churches to the good old way!

Many of the papers in this volume have been reprinted, because friends have thought them specially useful, and many more have been translated to other magazines, which annexation we accept as a compliment, even where the name of *The Sword and the Trowel* has been inadvertently omitted. At the same time, borrowed articles should be acknowledged as distinctly as possible, and the paper in which they first appear should have the credit of them. In America, in all sorts of newspapers and magazines, we find pieces of our work, and we think, therefore, that our subscribers are not badly catered for.

Our band of friends and helpers has suffered serious diminution by death during the last few months. The gaps in our ranks are many and wide. We earnestly pray that others may be moved to take the places of those who have gone home. Of course, our unflinching faithfulness may have driven away a few friends, though we are sure it has brought us more. Hitherto nothing has flagged. The Orphanage, and its half a thousand children, has had its table always supplied; the College has gone on educating men to preach the faith once delivered to the saints; the Evangelists have traveled

from place to place, and God has made them as clouds that water the earth; the Colporteurs have kept steadily to their useful toil; and Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund has stocked poor ministers' libraries in thousands of cases. To a large extent these works are kept going by the generosity of friends who read the weekly sermons and *The Sword and the Trowel*. Thanks, hearty and many, to them all for their loving aid. They would do us great service if they could increase the number of our subscribers, by inducing friends to take in the magazine. Ask them to begin in January.

The sword and trowel have both been used this year with all our might. We have built up the wall of the city, and we have tried to smite the King's enemies. How could we help it? No loyal soldier could endure to see his Lord's cause so grievously wronged by traitors. Something will come of the struggle over *The Down-Grade*. The Lord has designs in connection therewith which his adversaries little dream of. Meanwhile, it behoves all who love the Lord Jesus and his gospel to keep close together, and make common cause against deadly error. There are thousands who are of one mind in the Lord; let them break through all the separating lines of sect, and show their unity in Christ, both by prayer and action. Especially do we beg for the fervent prayers of all the faithful in Christ Jesus.

If our readers have hitherto counted us worthy, we again beg for their loving, practical sympathy, as we have enjoyed it these many years. The relationship between us and many of our readers is such as will outlast life itself. Very tenderly have our friends loved us. In the cup of human sympathy our God has brought us draughts of heavenly consolation. The Lord recompense our faithful helpers, and grant them mercy in that day!

So prays the reader's willing servant,

C. H. SPURGEON.

THE DOWN GRADE

(MARCH 1887)

THE Act of Uniformity, which came into effect in 1662, accomplished the purpose of its framers in expelling Puritanism from the Church established by law in England and Wales. Puritanism was obnoxious to King Charles II. and his court, and a large majority of the men high in office in both Church and State, chiefly for the godliness of living which it enjoined, and for the Calvinism of its teaching. With the ejection of the two thousand ministers who preferred freedom and purity of conscience to the retention of their livings, Calvinism was banished from the Church of England, excepting so far as the Articles were concerned. Arminianism took its place. Then the State Church, which the great reformers had planted, and which some of them had watered with their blood, presented the spectacle which went far to justify the sarcasm of an eminent writer, that she possessed "A Popish Liturgy, a Calvinistic Creed, and an Arminian Clergy." The ejected were Calvinists almost to a man. Previous to this period, some few Free Churches had been founded, and were Independent or Baptist, the latter being mainly of the General section, and of Dutch origin.

The ejected, who were in one sense alone the first Nonconformists, were mainly Presbyterians; some, however, were Independents, and a few Baptists. The Churches they established were all Calvinistic in their faith, and such they remained for at least that generation. It is a matter of veritable history, however, that such they did not all continue for any great length of time. Some of them, in the course of two or three generations, or even less, became either Arian or Socinian. This was eventually the case with nearly all the Presbyterians, and later on, with some of the Independents, and with many of the General Baptist Communities. By some means or other, first the ministers, and then the Churches, got on "the down grade," and in some cases, the descent was rapid, and in all, very disastrous. In proportion as the ministers seceded from the old Puritan godliness of life, and the old Calvinistic form of doctrine, they commonly became less earnest and less simple in their preaching, more speculative and less spiritual in the matter of their discourses, and dwelt more on the moral teachings of the New Testament, than on the great central truths of

revelation. Natural theology frequently took the place which the great truths of the gospel ought to have held, and the sermons became more and more Christless. Corresponding results in the character and life, first of the preachers and then of the people, were only too plainly apparent.

The race of preachers which followed the first Nonconformists, that is, the ejected ministers who became Nonconformists, retained the soundness of doctrine, and purity of life, for which they were everywhere remarkable. Their sermons were less lengthy, but still long, and less burdened with divisions and sub-divisions. The life, savor, and power of the gospel remained among them, and the churches, walking in the fear of God and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were slowly increased.

The Presbyterians were the first to get on the down line. They paid more attention to classical attainments and other branches of learning in their ministry than the Independents, while the Baptists had no academical institution of any kind. It would be an easy step in the wrong direction to pay increased attention to academical attainments in their ministers, and less to spiritual qualifications; and to set a higher value on scholarship and oratory, than on evangelical zeal and ability to rightly divide the word of truth.

Some of the ministers retained their Calvinistic soundness and their purity of character and life, and these, as a rule, gave prominence to the doctrines of the gospel, and were zealous in their ministry. But some embraced Arminian sentiments, while others professed to take a middle path, and called themselves Baxterians. These displayed, not only less zeal for the salvation of sinners, and, in many cases, less purity or strictness of life, but they adopted a different strain in preaching, dwelt more on general principles of religion, and less on the vital truths of the gospel. Ruin by sin, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and redemption by the blood of Christ—truths on the preaching of which God has always set the seal of his approbation—were conspicuous chiefly by their absence. In fact, the “wine on the lees well refined” was so mixed with the muddy water of human speculation, that it was no longer wine at all.

There was another section among the Presbyterians who, like the former two, retained a nominal orthodoxy, and professed to believe, though they seldom preached, evangelical sentiments. Men of this stamp were chiefly remarkable for the extreme coldness of their sermons, and the extreme dullness of their delivery.

Among those who called themselves Baxterians there was little likeness to Baxter; and his zeal and earnestness, and his close, penetrating preaching, and powerful appeals to the heart and conscience were wholly wanting, except in a very few. This remark will apply also to those who called themselves Arminians.

It would appear that the Arian and other heresies did not spread at first so quickly in London as in the country. The author of a manuscript written about 1730, professes to give the sentiments of all the Nonconformist ministers in London at that time. Among the Presbyterians there were, he says, nineteen Calvinists, thirteen Arminians, and twelve Baxterians. All the Independents, he avows, were Calvinists: “twenty-seven thoroughly, one somewhat dubious, three inclined to Antinomianism, and two who were disorderly.” There were two Seventh-day Baptists—one a Calvinist, and the other an Arminian. There were sixteen Baptists, of the Particular order; of whom seven were Calvinists, and “nine inclined to the Antinomian strain.”

Antinomianism was the term applied to the teaching of Dr. Tobias Crisp. Crisp had been an Arminian, but became an ardent Calvinist, going, perhaps, a little beyond Calvin in some things. He died in 1642, and his sermons were published by his son forty-five years after his death. They were printed from short-hand notes compared with Dr. Crisp’s own notes, and therefore were lacking in that correctness and finish which the author’s own hand would have given them. This will account for the crudeness of some of his expressions. He was a man of strong faith, ardent zeal, holy life, and great devotion and faithfulness in his ministerial work. He was called an Antinomian, but the term was misapplied. Many of his statements, however, while they will readily admit of an orthodox sense, lie open to the charge of going beyond the truth.

The publication of his sermons awoke a fierce controversy, which lasted some years, and did much mischief. Dr. Williams exposed what he considered the errors and erroneous tendency of some of his utterances; and even John Flavel was among those who denounced his teaching as erroneous and Antinomian. There need not have been such an outcry. The books written against Crisp, many of them good in their way, had the effect of frightening the timid, the doubtful, and the hesitating, who, to avoid *Crispianism*, as it was called, went as far as they could to the opposite extreme. They verged upon Arminianism, and some actually

became Arminians. The Arminianism of that day was a cold, dry, heartless thing, and many who took that name proved that they were already on “the down grade” towards Socinianism.

As is usual with people on an incline, some who got on “the down grade” went further than they intended, showing that it is easier to get on than to get off, and that where there is no brake it is very difficult to stop. These who turned from Calvinism may not have dreamed of denying the proper deity of the Son of God, renouncing faith in his stoning death and justifying righteousness, and denouncing the doctrine of human depravity, the need of Divine renewal, and the necessity for the Holy Spirit’s gracious work, in order that men might become new creatures; but, dreaming or not dreaming, this result became a reality.

It is exceedingly painful to have to state—and the conduct is no less censurable than pitiable—that among the two classes into which those who held Arian sentiments may be divided, the first were so mean and dishonest as to conceal their sentiments under ambiguous phrases. They so expressed themselves that their orthodox hearers might appropriate their statements in support of their own views, while their Arian adherents could turn them to support their scheme. It is stated on very good authority that “many wore this disguise all their days, and the most cautious carried the secret with them to the grave.” This is terrible to think of; men going down to the grave with a whole life of the very worst kind of hypocrisy unconfessed, the basest deceit and dishonesty unacknowledged, the life-long practice of a lie unrepented of. Such a course is the very worst form of lying, for it is telling lies in the name of the Lord. Others were only a little less hardened in their career of falsehood; they prepared a sermon, or other composition, revealing their true sentiments, which was made public after their decease. Still more confided their real sentiments to a small circle of adherents, who told the tale of heresy to the world only when the grave had closed over the teacher.

Such were the crafty devices of the men of “broad views,” and “free thought,” and “advanced sentiments,” in those days of “rebuke and blasphemy.” The almost blasphemous utterances of Mr. Voysey, daring and frightful as they are,* have the one redeeming feature of honesty. He puts the mark of unbelief in large characters on his own brow, and does not seek in the least to hide it from any one, but rather to glory in it, that he has set himself to deny and denounce all that is sacred, and true, and holy in the

gospel of our salvation. But these men deepened their own condemnation, and promoted the everlasting ruin of many of their followers by their hypocrisy and deceit; professing to be the ambassadors of Christ, and the heralds of his glorious gospel, their aim was to ignore his claims, deny him his rights, lower his character, rend the glorious vesture of his salvation, and trample his crown in the dust.

The second, and less numerous, class of Arian preachers were more honest. They boldly avowed their sentiments to their congregations, who as readily received them. In most cases, in both preachers and hearers, it was only a short step down from the Arianism which makes the eternal Son of God a super-angelic being to the Socinianism (miscalled Unitarianism) which makes him a man only, denying alike original sin, human depravity, the mediation of Christ, the personality and work of the eternal Spirit, and that new birth without which divine truth has declared no one can see the kingdom of God.

The descent of some few was less gradual, but more commonly, when once on "the down grade" their progress was slow, though unhappily sure. The central truth of Calvinism, as of the Gospel, is the person and work and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. We love to use this Pauline and inspired description of our divine Savior and royal Master, and so to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." When men begin to hesitate about, and hold back the truth in relation to him, it is a sign of an unhealthy state of soul; and when these truths are diluted, omitted, or otherwise tampered with, it is a sign which in plain words means "Beware."

The remark of a writer of reliable ability in reference to these times is worthy of quotation:—

"The deficiency of evangelical principles in some, and the coldness with which they came from the lips of others, seem to have prepared the way for the relinquishment of them, and for the introduction, first of Arminianism, and then of Arianism."

Those who were really orthodox in their sentiments were too often lax and unfaithful as to the introduction of heretical ministers into their pulpits, either as assistants or occasional preachers. In this way the Arian and Socinian heresies were introduced into the Presbyterian congregations in the city of Exeter. The Rev. Stephen Towgood and Mr. Walrond, the ministers, were both reputed as orthodox, but the Rev. Micaiah Towgood,

an avowed Arian, was chosen their assistant. The old ministers preached evangelical doctrine, but they complied all too readily with the wishes of their new colleague, and ceased to require a declaration of faith in the divinity of Christ in those who sought admission to the Lord's table. Sad to say, they continued to labor on in peace, the older men dealing out the "wine of the kingdom," and the "Living Bread," while the younger minister intermixed his rationalistic concoctions and his Socinian leaven. A similar case occurred in London. Dr. William Harris, an avowed Calvinist, and whose preaching was in accordance with Calvinistic doctrine, had for his assistant, during the last twenty years of his life, an avowed though not strongly pronounced Socinian, Dr. Lardner, who took the afternoon lectureship. When Dr. Harris died, Dr. Lardner was elected to be his successor. For some reason he declined, when Dr. Benson, another Socinian, succeeded to the pastorate. Thus, the old, old proverb was again proved true, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

This down-grade course was, we have said, more rapid, more general, and more fatal among the Presbyterians than among the Independents and General Baptists. We say *General* Baptists, for the deadening doctrines of Socinianism had made little inroad upon the *Particular* Baptists. We could not point to a single case of perversion to Socinianism during more than two centuries, though other and less vital errors have dealt much mischief among the churches of that order. Will our children and grandchildren be able to say as much of this and the next generation in fifty years time? Who can tell? But we pray and hope that they will be.

The principal cause of the quicker descent on "the down grade" among the Presbyterians than among other Nonconformists, may be traced, not so much to their more scholarly ministry, nor altogether to their renunciation of Puritan habits, but to their rule of admitting to the privileges of Church membership. Of course their children received the rite of baptism, according to their views of baptism, in infancy. They were thereby received—so the ministers taught, and so the people believed—into covenant with God, and had a right to the Lord's table, without any other qualification than a moral life. Many such children grew up unregenerate, and strangers to the work of renewing grace; yet they claimed to be Christians, and to be admitted to all the privileges of the church, and their claim was not disallowed. To such the earnest appeals of faithful ministers of Christ would be irksome and unpalatable. The broader road and easier

way of the “men of reason and culture,” which admitted of laxity of discipline and pliancy of sentiments and habits, was far more agreeable to their tastes and ideas, while the homage paid to reason and understanding, at the expense of revelation, gratified their pride, and left them free to walk after their own hearts in things pertaining to religion. Thus they chose them pastors after their own hearts, men who could, and would, and did, cry “Peace, peace,” when the only way of peace was ignored or denied.

These facts furnish a lesson for the present times, when, as in some cases, it is all too plainly apparent men are willing to forego the old for the sake of the new. But commonly it is found in theology that that which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true.

In another paper we propose to trace “the down grade” course among other Protestants in this country—a sad piece of business, but one which must needs be done. Oh that it might act as a warning to the unsettled and unsettling spirits of our own day!

(APRIL 1887)

THE DOWN GRADE.

SECOND ARTICLE.

THE period from 1688, when William III. began his reign, to the time of the commencement of the long reign of George III., has been described as “a quiet time” among Nonconformists. It was so in more senses than one. There was a cessation of open and organized persecution. The Laudian spirit still lived, but it did not reign. The battle between Conformists and Nonconformists was no longer as it had been, one of the sword and of force, but rather of the pen, and by means of that quiet, subtle influence which abettors of State churches know so well how to wield. It was quiet, too, in the sense that there were few instances of lively faith, earnest zeal, and whole-souled devotedness in the cause of the gospel. To a large extent, and with some notable and happy exceptions, it was the quiet of corruption and death. The profligacy of Charles II., and the perfidy of James II., had told upon the Court, upon the nobility, upon pulpit and press, and upon society generally. True religion languished; and, but for a small remnant of earnest and faithful men, the decay and death would have been complete. It was a fitting time for the propagation of the Pelagian and Socinian heresies. Arminianism, which is only Pelagianism under another name, had, to a large extent, eaten out the life of the Church of England, and Arianism followed to further and complete the destruction.

As if to show how powerless in themselves are the best defined articles of faith, the first open advocates of Arianism were clergymen of the Established Church. Dr. William Whiston, Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, and Dr. Samuel Clarke, Rector of St. James’s, Westminster, were the captains in this unholy war with truth. Many of the clergy, and a few among the laity, embraced their sentiments. The majority of professed adherents to the State Church were too indifferent to religion to trouble themselves about the matter. But it was otherwise among Nonconformists. Many of the hearers were not much, if at all, behind their ministers in intelligence and interest in theological matters; and where this

was the case, the bungling theories of Whiston and Clarke were readily embraced as agreeable to their taste and flattering to their reason. James Pierce, a Presbyterian minister, first at Cambridge, then at Newbury, and afterwards at Exeter, wrought incalculable mischief. He was a man who, for learning, eloquence, and other natural and acquired abilities, held a high place in the esteem of the congregations to which he ministered. So much the more subtle and powerful was the influence of his teaching, and so much the more disastrous were the results.

Among the Independents the leaven worked. In the colleges, or academies, as they were then called, the mischief first came to a head. Doctor Doddridge was as sound as he was amiable; but perhaps he was not always judicious; or more probably still, he was too judicious, and not sufficiently bold and decided. As the pastor of an influential church, and as the head of an academy which ranked higher than any other, his amiable disposition permitted him to do what men made of sterner stuff would not have done. He sometimes mingled in a fraternal manner, even exchanging pulpits, with men whose orthodoxy was called in question. It had its effect on many of the younger men, and served to lessen in the estimate of the people generally the growing, divergence of sentiment. No one, however, could, and certainly the present writer will not, insinuate even the suspicion of heresy against the author of

“Jesus, I love thy charming name.”

Dr. Doddridge was succeeded by Dr. Ashworth, of Daventry. He was recommended to the Independent church at Northampton as his successor in the pastorate, as well as in the academy, in Dr. Doddridge’s will. But Dr. Ashworth elected to remain at Daventry, and the Academy was removed thither. Great abilities, much learning, consummate prudence, unaffected modesty, with great devotion and diligence in his tutorial duties, are the outlines of his character as drawn by the historian. He was a Calvinist of the moderate order, and we should be disposed to put a strong emphasis on the “moderate.” So, at least, it is fair to infer from the testimony of one of his pupils, Dr. Joseph Priestley, the great champion of Socinianism among Nonconformists. He says:—”In my time the academy was in a state peculiarly favorable to the serious pursuit of truth, as the students were about equally divided upon every question of much importance, such as liberty, necessity, the sleep of the soul, and *all the articles of theological orthodoxy and heresy*; in consequence of which, all these topics were the

subject of continual discussion. Our tutors, also, were of different opinions, Dr. Ashworth taking the orthodox side of every question, and Mr. Clark, the sub-tutor, that of heresy, though always with the greatest modesty. Both of our tutors being young, at least as tutors, and some of the senior students excelling more than they could pretend to do in several branches of study, they indulged us in the greatest freedoms. The general plan of our studies, which may be seen in Dr. Doddridge's published lectures, was exceedingly favorable to free inquiry, as we were referred to authors on both sides of every question. In this situation I saw reason to embrace what is generally called the heterodox side of every question."

The subsequent history of the famous academy, founded and supported by Mr. Coward, and afterwards endowed by him, "with the express condition that the students shall be educated in the principles of the Assembly's Catechism," illustrates the folly and the virtual unfaithfulness of the course adopted by the professors. Mr. Robins was Dr. Ashworth's successor as pastor and tutor, and he was reputed as sound in the faith. His assistant tutor, however, was Thomas Belsham, who afterwards succeeded him in the theological chair. Belsham was a fellow-student of Priestley, and became an avowed opponent of Calvinism, and the open advocate of Socinianism. He had the honesty to resign his tutorship. But the mischief had been done. When the enemy had sowed tares among the wheat, "he went his way." The seed could not easily be dislodged. Mr. Horsey, his successor, could have been little better, for "most of the pupils were found to be Socinians." He had to resign, as not faithfully executing the will of the founder, and the Academy was dissolved.

This was the application to an institution thoroughly infected with theological leprosy of the wise law—wise in both a sanitary and spiritual sense—which God gave of old. The house had been scraped, and patched, and repaired, but the leprosy increased. "And, behold, if the plague be spread in the house it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place."

As the fish decays first at the head, and as the old, old proverb is still commonly true, "Like priest like people," so little good can be expected of such ministers, and little hoped for of the hearers who approve their sentiments. Surely there was need enough of Whitefield and the other great

preachers connected with the evangelical revival. That revival came not a day too soon, for the churches in general were indeed “low in a low place.”

The Independent churches, though many of them were grievously tainted with heresy, did not remain corrupt. A race of earnest and faithful ministers were raised up who built again that which had been thrown down, leaving their mark on the age and their example to their successors. Do the present race of men prove themselves worthy successors of their fathers? Some do, no doubt. Would that the same could be said of all! But in too many cases skeptical daring seems to have taken the place of evangelical zeal, and the husks of theological speculations are preferred to the wholesome bread of gospel truth. With some the endeavor seems to be not how steadily and faithfully they can walk in the truth, but how far they can get from it. To them divine truth is like a lion or a tiger, and they give it “a wide berth.” Our counsel is—Do not go too near the precipice; you may slip or fall over. Keep where the ground is firm; do not venture on the rotten ice. Take the advice of an old missionary, the late Thomas Morgan, of Howrah. The writer, and a worthy brother who fell asleep twenty years ago, were all journeying in the direction of Maidstone, where the missionary was to meet the late Mr. Dobney. Said one of us to him, “How about Mr. D.’s theory concerning future punishment?” The old Welshman replied, “Well, if he brings up the subject to me, I shall say, ‘Don’t try it, that’s all.’” So we venture to say to any venturesome spirit who wants to follow the Will-with-a-wisp of modern thought, “Don’t try it; there are dangerous bogs near, where you may soon lose yourself and all that is dear to you.” If anyone wishes to know where the tadpole of Darwinism was hatched, we could point him to the pew of the old chapel in High Street, Shrewsbury, where Mr. Darwin, his father, and we believe his father’s father, received their religious training. The chapel was built for Mr. Talents, an ejected minister; but for very many years full-blown Socinianism has been taught there, as also in the old chapel at Chester, where Matthew Henry used to minister, and where a copy of his Commentary, of the original edition, is kept for public use, the only witness, we fear, to the truths he taught there. It is of less importance, but still worthy of note, that the property with which the old High Street church at Shrewsbury was endowed, producing now from £300 to £400 per annum, has long been appropriated to uphold Socinian teaching.

The General Baptists have yet to be noticed. And here we must draw a line hard and sharp between the Old Connection and the New Connection. The

latter was formed in 1770, and was the result of the heterodoxy of the former. The Old Connection generally became Arianized, and, with hardly an exception, followed on “the down grade” to Socinianism. A writer of acknowledged repute, writing at the early part of the present century, makes this rather startling statement:—

“Arminianism among the dissenters has, in general, been a cold, dry, and lifeless system, and its effects upon the heart have been commonly weak and spiritless. With the General Baptists, who avowed it to be their creed, this was remarkably the effect, and their congregations did not increase. Besides, from facts too stubborn to be bent, and too numerous to be contradicted, Arminianism has been among them the common road to Arianism and Socinianism. Their ministers and congregations were the first who openly professed these opinions; and their societies have felt the decay which these opinions have uniformly produced.”

The writer can point to several places in the county of Kent where General Baptist congregations of the Old Connection existed, and he can describe their present condition. That at Dover has been for many years Socinian, and, perhaps, it is one of the most vigorous in the county, though the chapel is small and the attendance few. That at Deal is Socinian likewise, if we can describe it as being anything, when the place is open for one service only in three weeks. That at Wingham has been closed very many years. That in the large and wealthy parish of Yalding, has been closed for half a century. The writer often visited and preached in this old, stable-like building thirty years ago, the place being lent for the purpose; but of all dead places, that was the most dead. Spiritually, it was like the face of the country around Dowlais Top—not a vestige of herb, or grass, or any living thing to be seen.

The old church at Eythorne was for nearly two hundred and fifty years General Baptist, belonging first to the Old Connection, and then to the New. About a hundred years ago the pastor and congregation became Calvinistic, and joined the Particular Baptist body. Strange to say, but the fact is so, that from that time it began to develop and increase in numbers, spiritual power, and social position. And now it can be said with truth, that there are very few churches in Great Britain whose career, during the past hundred years, has been equally remarkable. From the church in this village of less than six hundred inhabitants swarms have been sent out to Dover, Canterbury, and Deal, while its members or their descendants have been

instruments in planting, or have helped to found, churches in Folkestone, in Ramsgate, Margate, and other places in the Isle of Thanet.

In the General Baptist Church at Bessels Green, near Sevenoaks, there was a long, and fierce, and painful struggle between Socinianism and evangelical orthodoxy, the latter at last prevailing.

These last two cases illustrate the “up grade,” rather than the “down grade,” and they will bring out the latter in bolder relief.

Narrowness of space and abundance of facts have burdened and hampered us in these sketches, and we can only add a few hints as to the cause or causes of the sad decay in piety and principle which it has been our painful duty to narrate.

In the case of every errant course there is always a first wrong step. If we can trace that wrong step, we may be able to avoid it and its results. Where, then, is the point of divergence from the “King’s highway of truth”? What is the first step astray? Is it doubting this doctrine, or questioning that sentiment, or being skeptical as to the other article of orthodox belief? We think not. These doubts and this skepticism are the outcome of something going before.

If a mariner, having to traverse an unknown sea, does not put implicit confidence in his charts, and therefore does not consult them for guidance in steering the ship, he is, as anyone can see, every moment exposed to dangers of various kinds. Now, the Word of God—the Book written by holy men as they were moved by the Spirit of God—is the Christian’s chart; and though, in a ship’s company, some of the men may have little critical knowledge of navigation, the captain is supposed to be well instructed therein, and to be able, by consulting the charts, to steer the ship aright; so in reference to ministers of Christ’s gospel, and pastors of Christ’s church, which he hath purchased with his blood. The first step astray is a want of adequate faith in the divine inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. All the while a man bows to the authority of God’s Word, he will not entertain any sentiment contrary to its teaching. “To the law and to the testimony,” is his appeal concerning every doctrine. He esteems that holy Book, concerning all things, to be right, and therefore he hates every false way. But let a man question, or entertain low views of the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and he is without chart to guide him, and without anchor to hold him.

In looking carefully over the history of the times, and the movement of the times, of which we have written briefly, this fact is apparent: that where ministers and Christian churches have held fast to the truth that the Holy Scriptures have been given by God as an authoritative and infallible rule of faith and practice, they have never wandered very seriously out of the right way. But when, on the other hand, reason has been exalted above revelation, and made the exponent of revelation, all kinds of errors and mischiefs have been the result.

If this be a fact—and who can disprove it?—then we live in dangerous times, and there is great peril very near all those, whoever they may be, who call in question the inspiration—the divine inspiration—of the Word of God. “O earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord.”

The writer is of opinion that the great majority of those who are sound in the doctrine of inspiration, are more or less Calvinistic in doctrine; and that the more the oracles of divine truth are humbly and prayerfully studied, the more closely the student’s views will coincide with evangelical truth. That he is not alone in his opinion will be seen from the following:—

“Veneration for the sacred Scriptures may certainly be considered as a test of the general purity of religious sentiments. Whether any will be found to equal Calvinists in this respect, shall be left to the judgment; of those readers who have made extensive observations on the subject. Perhaps it cannot be contradicted that, in proportion as any sect recedes from Calvinism, their veneration for the Scriptures is diminished. The Bible is the Calvinist’s creed. Whatever God has spoken, he feels himself bound to receive and believe, however mysterious the doctrine may be. Arminians, in general, will not be found to be equal to them in this respect, and many of that creed lay down their ideas of the moral perfections of the Deity as the foundation, and explain every part of Scripture in consonance with them, though, in order to accomplish this, no small degree of force must be employed. The Arian venerates the Scriptures still less than the Arminian; his ideas of inspiration are lower; his canons of criticism less honorable to the sacred writers; human reason is exalted to a higher office, and what is not comprehensible by its grasp, is not readily received. The mind of the Socinian feels still less veneration for the Word of God; for, according to his sentiments, some parts of it are not inspired; mistakes occur in the reasoning of the apostles; not a few passages are unauthentic, and what remains is interpreted with a latitude as to the expressions and language of

Scripture, which would not be tolerated in expounding the sense of any other writer.” (“History of Dissenters,” by Bogue and Bennet.)

The Rev. Job Orton, one of Dr. Doddridge’s students, and for a short time an assistant tutor with him at Northampton, was the minister of the united congregation of Presbyterians and Independents, meeting at High Street, Shrewsbury, from 1741 to 1765. He was not considered fully orthodox, though many of his sentiments were sound and good. Many of his hearers suspected him of heresy concerning the Godhead of Christ, and when, in preaching those expositions of the Bible, which were afterwards published in six volumes, he came to Isaiah 9:6, “Unto us a son is born,” etc., and they were listening with breathless attention as to what he would say on that part, “The mighty God,” they were sadly disappointed when he passed the glorious declaration over by saying, “The mighty God. The meaning of this I cannot tell; and how should I, when his name is called Wonderful?” It need be no matter of surprise that his successor at High Street was a Socinian, and that the orthodox part of his congregation founded the Independent church at Swan Hill, which retains, in all essential things, its primitive soundness.

And yet Mr. Orton strongly recommended Philip Henry’s statement of his religious belief, and has left on record, in his letters, remarks which are worthy to be pondered, as coming from a man whom Socinians regarded with favor.

“I have long since found,” says he “(and every year that I live increases my conviction of it), that when ministers entertain their people with lively and pretty things, confine themselves to general harangues, insist principally on moral duties, without enforcing them warmly and affectionately by evangelical motives; while they neglect the peculiars of the gospel, never or seldom display the grace of God, and the love of Christ in our redemption; the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by a constant dependence on the Holy Spirit of God for assistance and strength in the duties of the Christian life, their congregations are in a wretched state; some are dwindling to nothing, as is the case with several in this neighborhood, where there are now not as many scores as there were hundreds in their meeting-places, fifty years ago. But where, by trade and manufactures, new persons come to the place, and fill up the vacant seats, there is a fatal deadness spread over the congregation. They run in ‘the course of this world,’ follow every fashionable folly, and family and personal godliness

seems in general to be lost among them. There is scarcely any appearance of life and zeal in the cause of religion, which demands and deserves the greatest.

“Whereas, on the contrary, I never knew an instance where a minister was a pious, serious man, whose strain was evangelical and affectionate, but his congregation kept up, though death and removals had made many breaches in it.

“These letters were written when he had retired from the pastorate, residing at Kidderminster for the last eighteen years of his life.”

It would seem that Orton had seen the folly of “the down grade” course, and was anxious to bear his testimony, to deter others.

But leaving men and their opinions, the Word of the Lord standeth fast for ever; and that Word to every one who undertakes to be God’s messenger, and to speak the Lord’s message to the people, is “He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.”

The Lord help us all to be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

NOTES.

(APRIL 1887)

We are glad that the article upon “The Down Grade” has excited notice. It is not intended to be an attack on any one, but to be a warning to all. We are asked whether Methodists are upon “The Down Grade,” and we are happy to reply that we do not think so. In our fellowship with Methodists of all grades we have found them firmly adhering to those great evangelical doctrines for which we contend. This, however, is no answer to the historical fact that Arminianism has been the route by which the older dissenters have traveled downward to Socinianism; neither is it a reply to the charge that not a few have in these days gone far beyond Evangelical Arminianism, and are on the road to Unitarianism, or something worse. We care far more for the central evangelical truths than we do for Calvinism as

a system; but we believe that Calvinism has in it a conservative force which helps to hold men to the vital truth, and therefore we are sorry to see any quitting it who have once accepted it. Those who hold the eternal verities of salvation, and yet do not see all that we believe and embrace, are by no means the objects of our opposition: warfare is with men who are giving up the atoning sacrifice, denying the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and casting slurs upon justification by faith. The present struggle is not a debate upon the question of Calvinism or Arminianism, but of the truth of God *versus* the inventions of men. All who believe the gospel should unite against that “modern thought” which is its deadly enemy.

On all hands we hear cries for unity in this, and unity in that; but to our mind the main need of this age is not compromise, but conscientiousness. “First pure, then peaceable.” It is easy to cry “a confederacy,” but that union which is not based upon the truth of God is rather a conspiracy than a communion. Charity by all means; but honesty also. Love, of course, but love to God as well as love to men, and love of truth as well as love of union. It is exceedingly difficult in these times to preserve one’s fidelity before God and one’s fraternity among men. Should not the former be preferred to the latter if both cannot be maintained? We think so.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

AUGUST, 1887.

ANOTHER WORD CONCERNING THE DOWN-GRADE.

By C. H. Spurgeon.

NO lover of the gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil. We are willing to make a large discount from our apprehensions on the score of natural timidity, the caution of age, and the weakness produced by pain; but yet our solemn conviction is that things are much worse in many churches than they seem to be, and are rapidly tending downward. Read those newspapers which represent the Broad School of Dissent, and ask yourself, How much farther could they go? What doctrine remains to be abandoned? What other truth to be the object of contempt? A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them!

At the back of doctrinal falsehood comes a natural decline of spiritual life, evidenced by a taste for questionable amusements, and a weariness of devotional meetings. At a certain meeting of ministers and church-officers, one after another doubted the value of prayer-meetings; all confessed that they had a very small attendance, and several acknowledged without the slightest compunction that they had quite given them up. What means this? Are churches in a right condition when they have only one meeting for prayer in a week, and that a mere skeleton? Churches which have prayer-meetings several times on the Lord's-day, and very frequently during the

week, yet feel their need of more prayer; but what can be said of those who very seldom practice united supplication? Are there few conversions? Do the congregations dwindle? Who wonders that this is the case when the spirit of prayer has departed?

As for questionable amusements—time was when a Nonconformist minister who was known to attend the play-house would soon have found himself without a church. And justly so; for no man can long possess the confidence, even of the most worldly, who is known to be a haunter of theaters. Yet at the present time it is matter of notoriety that preachers of no mean repute defend the play-house, and do so because they have been seen there. Is it any wonder that church members forget their vows of consecration, and run with the unholy in the ways of frivolity, when they hear that persons are tolerated in the pastorate who do the same? We doubt not that, for writing these lines we shall incur the charge of prudery and bigotry, and this will but prove how low are the tone and spirit of the churches in many places. The fact is, that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn men of its existence, and entreat them to keep out of it. When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly.

An eminent minister, who is well versed in the records of Nonconformity, remarked to us the other day that he feared history was about to repeat itself among Dissenters. In days gone by, they aimed at being thought respectable, judicious, moderate, and learned, and, in consequence, they abandoned the Puritanic teaching with which they started, and toned down their doctrines. The spiritual life which had been the impelling cause of their dissent declined almost to death's door, and the very existence of evangelical Nonconformity was threatened. Then came the outburst of living godliness under Whitefield and Wesley, and with it new life for Dissent, and increased influence in every direction.

Alas! many are returning to the poisoned cups which drugged that declining generation, when it surrendered itself to Unitarian lethargy. Too many ministers are toying with the deadly cobra of "another gospel," in the form of "modern thought." As a consequence, their congregations are thinning: the more spiritual of their members join the "Brethren," or some

other company of “believers unattached”; while the more wealthy, and show-loving, with some of unquestionable devoutness, go off to the Church of England.

Let us not hide from ourselves the fact that the Episcopal Church is awake, and is full of zeal and force. Dissenting as we do most intensely from her Ritualism, and especially abhorring her establishment by the State, we cannot but perceive that she grows, and grows, among other reasons, because spiritual life is waning among certain Dissenters. Where the gospel is fully and powerfully preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, our churches not only hold their own, but win converts; but when that which constitutes their strength is gone—we mean when the gospel is concealed, and the life of prayer is slighted—the whole thing becomes a mere form and fiction. For this thing our heart is sore grieved. Dissent for mere dissent’s sake would be the bitter fruit of a willful mind. Dissent as mere political partisanship is a degradation and travesty of religion. Dissent for truth’s sake, carried out by force of the life within, is noble, praiseworthy, and fraught with the highest benefits to the race. Are we to have the genuine living thing, or are we to have that corruption of the best from which the worst is produced? Conformity, or nonconformity, *per se* is nothing; but a new creature is everything, and the truth upon which alone that new creature can live is worth dying a thousand deaths to conserve. It is not the shell that is so precious, but the kernel which it contains; when the kernel is gone, what is there left that is worth a thought? Our nonconformity is beyond measure precious as a vital spiritual force, but only while it remains such will it justify its own existence.

The case is mournful. Certain ministers are making infidels. Avowed atheists are not a tenth as dangerous as those preachers who scatter doubt and stab at faith. A plain man told us the other day that two ministers had derided him because he thought we should pray for rain. A gracious woman bemoaned in my presence that a precious promise in Isaiah which had comforted her had been declared by her minister to be uninspired. It is a common thing to hear working-men excuse their wickedness by the statement that there is no hell, “the parson says so.” But we need not prolong our mention of painful facts. Germany was made unbelieving by her preachers, and England is following in her track. Attendance at places of worship is declining, and reverence for holy things is vanishing; and we solemnly believe this to be largely attributable to the skepticism which has flashed from the pulpit and spread among the people. Possibly the men

who uttered the doubt never intended it to go so far; but none the less they have done the ill, and cannot undo it. Their own observation ought to teach them better. Have these advanced thinkers filled their own chapels? Have they, after all, prospered through discarding the old methods? Possibly, in a few cases genius and tact have carried these gentry over the destructive results of their ministry; but in many cases their pretty new theology has scattered their congregations. In meeting-houses holding a thousand, or twelve hundred, or fifteen hundred, places once packed to the ceiling with ardent hearers, how small are the numbers now! We would mention instances, but we forbear. The places which the gospel filled the new nonsense has emptied, and will keep empty.

This fact will have little influence with “the cultured”; for, as a rule, they have cultivated a fine development of conceit. “Yes,” said one, whose pews held only here and there a worshipper, “it will always be found that in proportion as the preacher’s mind enlarges, his congregation diminishes.” These destroyers of our churches appear to be as content with their work as monkeys with their mischief. That which their fathers would have lamented they rejoice in: the alienation of the poor and simple-minded from their ministry they accept as a compliment, and the grief of the spiritually-minded they regard as an evidence of their power. Truly, unless the Lord had kept his own we should long before this have seen our Zion ploughed as a field.

The other day we were asked to mention the name of some person who might be a suitable pastor for a vacant church, and the deacon who wrote said, “Let him be a converted man, and let him be one who believes what he preaches; for there are those around us who give us the idea that they have neither part nor lot in the matter.” This remark is more commonly made than we like to remember, and there is, alas! too much need for it. A student from a certain college preached to a congregation we sometimes visit such a sermon that the deacon said to him in the vestry, “Sir, do you believe in the Holy Ghost?” The youth replied, “I suppose I do.” To which the deacon answered, “I suppose you do *not*, or you would not have insulted us with such false doctrine.” A little plain-speaking would do a world of good just now. These gentlemen desire to be let alone. They want no noise raised. Of course thieves hate watch-dogs, and love darkness. It is time that somebody should spring his rattle, and call attention to the way in which God is being robbed of his glory, and man of his hope.

It now becomes a serious question how far those who abide by the faith once delivered to the saints should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another gospel. Christian love has its claims, and divisions are to be shunned as grievous evils; but how far are we justified in being in confederacy with those who are departing from the truth? It is a difficult question to answer so as to keep the balance of the duties. For the present it behoves believers to be cautious, lest they lend their support and countenance to the betrayers of the Lord. It is one thing to overleap all boundaries of denominational restriction for the truth's sake: this we hope all godly men will do more and more. It is quite another policy which would urge us to subordinate the maintenance of truth to denominational prosperity and unity. Numbers of easy-minded people wink at error so long as it is committed by a clever man and a good-natured brother, who has so many fine points about him. Let each believer judge for himself; but, for our part, we have put on a few fresh bolts to our door, and we have given orders to keep the chain up; for, under color of begging the friendship of the servant, there are those about who aim at robbing THE MASTER.

We fear it is hopeless ever to form a society which can keep out men base enough to profess one thing and believe another; but it might be possible to make an informal alliance among all who hold the Christianity of their fathers. Little as they might be able to do, they could at least protest, and as far as possible free themselves of that complicity which will be involved in a conspiracy of silence. If for a while the evangelicals are doomed to go down, let them die fighting, and in the full assurance that their gospel will have a resurrection when the inventions of "modern thought" shall be burned up with fire unquenchable.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

OUR REPLY TO SUNDRY CRITICS AND ENQUIRERS.

By C. H. Spurgeon.

ACCORDING to the best of our ability we sounded an alarm in Zion concerning the growing evils of the times, and we have received abundant proof that it was none too soon. Letters from all quarters declare that the case of the church at this present is even worse than we thought it to be. It seems that, instead of being guilty of exaggeration, we should have been justified in the production of a far more terrible picture. This fact causes us real sorrow. Had we been convicted of misstatement we would have recanted with sincerely penitent confessions, and we should have been glad to have had our fears removed. It is no joy to us to bring accusations; it is no pleasure to our heart to seem to be in antagonism with so many. We are never better pleased than when in fellowship with our brethren we can rejoice in the progress of the gospel.

But no one has set himself to disprove our allegations. One gentleman, of neutral tint, has dared to speak of them as vague, when he knows that nothing could be more definite. But no one has shown that prayer-meetings are valued, and are largely attended; no one has denied that certain ministers frequent theaters; no one has claimed that the Broad School newspapers have respected a single truth of revelation; and no one has borne witness to the sound doctrine of our entire ministry. Now we submit that these are the main points at issue: at least, these are the only things we contend about. Differences of judgment upon minor matters, and varieties of mode in action, are not now under question; but matters vital to religion. Others may trifle about such things; we cannot, and dare not.

Instead of dealing with these weighty things, our opponents have set to work to make sneering allusions to our sickness. All the solemn things we

have written are the suggestions of our pain, and we are advised to take a long rest. With pretended compassion, but with real insolence, they would detract from the truth by pointing to the lameness of its witness. Upon this trifling we have this much to say:—In the first place, our article was written when we were in vigorous health, and it was in print before any sign of an approaching attack was discoverable. In the second place, if we were in a debate with Christians we should feel sure that, however short they might run of arguments, they would not resort to personalities; least of all, to those personalities which make a painful malady their target. Incidentally, this breach of Christian courtesy goes to show that the new theology is introducing, not only a new code of morals, but a new tone and spirit. It would seem to be taken for granted, that if men are such fools as to adhere to an old-fashioned faith, of course they must be idiots, and they deserve to be treated with that contemptuous pity which is the quintessence of hate. If you can find out that they are sufferers, impute their faith to their disease, and pretend that their earnestness is nothing but petulance arising from their pain. But enough of this: we are so little embittered in spirit by our pangs that we can laugh at the arrows aimed at our weaker member. Do our critics think that, like Achilles, our vulnerable point lies, not in our head, but in our heel?

We are grateful to the editor of *Word and Work* for speaking out so plainly. He says:—

“In *The Sword and the Trowel* for the present month Mr. Spurgeon gives no uncertain sound concerning departures from the faith. His exposure of the dishonesty which, under the cover of orthodoxy, assails the very foundations of faith is opportune in the interests of truth. No doubt, like a faithful prophet in like evil times, he will be called a ‘troubler of Israel,’ and already we have noticed he has been spoken of as a pessimist; but any such attempts to lessen the weight of his testimony are only certain to make it more effective. When a strong sense of duty prompts public speech it will be no easy task to silence it.

“The preachers of false doctrine dislike nothing more than the premature detection of their doings. Only give them time enough to prepare men’s minds for the reception of their ‘new views,’ and they are confident of success. They have had too much time already, and any who refuse to speak out now must be held to be ‘partakers of their evil deeds.’ As Mr. Spurgeon says, ‘A little plain-speaking would do a world of good just now.

These gentlemen desire to be let alone. They want no noise raised. Of course thieves hate watch-dogs, and love darkness. It is time that somebody should spring his rattle, and call attention to the way in which God is being robbed of his glory and man of his hope.'

“Only those who have given some attention to the progress of error during recent years can form any just idea of the rapid strides with which it is now advancing. Under the plea of liberalism, unscriptural doctrines are allowed to pass current in sermons and periodicals, which, only a few years ago, would have been faithfully resisted unto the death. When anyone even mildly protests, preachers and journalists are almost unanimous in drowning the feeble testimony either by sneers or shouts. Throughout the wide realm of literature there seems to be a conspiracy to hate and hunt down every Scriptural truth. Let any man, especially if he belongs to an evangelical church, denounce or deny any part of the creed he has solemnly vowed to defend, and at once his fortune is made. The press makes the world ring with his fame, and even defends the dishonesty which clings to a stipend forfeited by the violation of his vow. It is far otherwise with the defender of the faith. He is mocked, insulted, and laughed to scorn. The spirit of the age is against him. So in greater or lesser measure it has always been. But when he remembers who is the prince of this world and the ruler of the age, he may be well content to possess his soul in patience.”

This witness is true.

Let no man dream that a sudden crotchet has entered our head, and that we have written in hot haste: we have waited long, perhaps too long, and have been slow to speak. Neither let any one suppose that we build up our statements upon a few isolated facts, and bring to the front certain regrettable incidents which might as well have been forgotten. He who knows all things can alone reveal the wretched facts which have come under our notice. Their memory will, we trust, die and be buried with the man who has borne their burden, and held his peace because he had no wish to create disunion. Resolved to respect the claims both of truth and love, we have pursued an anxious pathway. To protest when nothing could come of it but anger, has seemed senseless; to assail evil and crush a vast amount of good in the process, has appeared to be injurious. If all knew all, our reticence would be wondered at and we are not sure that it would be approved. Whether approved or not, we have had no motive but the general progress of the cause of truth, and the glory of God.

Had there been a right spirit in those who resent our warning, they would either have disproved our charge, or else they would have lamented its truthfulness, and have set to work to correct the evil which we lamented. Alas, the levity which plays ducks and drakes with doctrines, makes game of all earnestness, and finds sport in Christian decision! Yet, surely there is a remnant of faithful ones, and these will be stirred to action, and will cry mightily unto God that the plague may be stayed. The gospel is too precious for us to be indifferent to its adulteration. By the love we bear to the Lord Jesus we are bound to defend the treasure with which he has put us in trust.

That ugly word “pessimist” has been hurled at our devoted head. We are denounced as “gloomy.” Well, well! The day was when we were censured for being wickedly humorous, and many were the floggings we received for our unseemly jests. Now we are morose and bitter. So the world’s opinion changes. A half-a-farthing would be an extravagant price to pay for the verdict one way or another. In truth, we are quite able to take an *optimistic* view of things. (Is that the correct word, Sir Critic?) We are glad to admit that there is much of Christian zeal, self-sacrifice, and holy perseverance in the world. Possibly there is more than ever. Did we ever say otherwise? We rejoice in the thousands of gracious, holy, large-hearted men around us. Who dares to say we do not? We see much that is hopeful and delightful in many quarters. Is this at all to the point? May there not be much that is beautiful and healthful in a countenance where yet there may be the symptoms of a foul disease? The church is large, and while one end of her field may rejoice us with golden grain, another part of it may be full of thorns and briars. It often happens that causes of sorrow may be increased at the very same moment when occasions of joy are most numerous. We judge that it is so just now. The cause of God goes on in spite of foes, and his truth is sure to conquer in the long run, however influential its opposers. No, no, we are by no means despondent for the Lord’s kingdom. That would be a dishonor to his eternal power and Godhead. Our amiable critics may possibly be pleased to know that they will not find us bathing in vinegar, nor covering our swollen foot with wormwood, nor even drinking quinine with our vegetables; but they will find us rejoicing in the Lord, and buckling on our harness for the war with as firm a confidence as if all men were on our side. Bad as things are from one point of view, there is a bright side to affairs: the Lord has yet his men in reserve who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

We have said, with deep grief that we should have had to say it, that many ministers have departed from the faith; and this was no unkind suspicion on our part, but a matter of fact, ascertained in many ways, and made most sadly sure. We trust that the Baptists are by no means so far gone as the Independents: indeed, we feel sure that they are not. Still, we do not say this in order to throw stones at others. A well-known Congregational minister, who is preparing a book upon this painful subject, writes us—"I have not a large acquaintance with the state of opinion in your denomination. I groan over my own. There are many faithful to Christ, and to the souls of men; but, alas! it seems to me that many have no kind of gospel to preach, and the people are willing that it should be so. Some of our colleges are poisoning the churches at the fountains. I very much fear that an unconverted ministry is multiplying." To the same import is a letter from another brother of the same denomination, who says—"I cannot agree with *The British Weekly*, that you take an 'extremely pessimistic' view of the evil. On the contrary, I am disposed to think that your conviction is faint compared with what the reality would warrant. — College, for example, continues to pour forth men to take charge of our churches who do not believe, in any proper sense, in the inspiration of the Scriptures, who deny the vicarious sacrifice on the cross, and hold that, if sinners are not saved on this side the grave, they may, can, or must be on the other. And the worst of it is, the people love it." We could multiply this painful evidence, but there is no need, since the charge is not denied. It is ridiculed; it is treated as a matter of no consequence, but it is not seriously met. Is this what we have come to? Is there no doctrine left which is to be maintained? Is there no revelation? Or is that revelation a nose of wax to be shaped by the finger of fashion? Are the skeptics so much to the fore that no man will open his mouth against them? Are all the orthodox afraid of the ridicule of the "cultured"? We cannot believe it. The private knowledge which we possess will not allow of so unhappy a conclusion; yet Christian people are now so tame that they shrink from expressing themselves. The house is being robbed, its very walls are being digged down, but the good people who are in bed are too fond of the warmth, and too much afraid of getting broken heads, to go downstairs and meet the burglars; they are even half vexed that a certain noisy fellow will spring his rattle, or cry, "Thieves!"

That the evil leaven is working in the churches as well as among the ministers, is also sadly certain. A heterodox party exists in many

congregations, and those who compose it are causing trouble to the faithful, and sadly influencing the more timid towards a vacillating policy. An earnest preacher, who is only one of a class, says: "The old truths are unpopular here. I am told that I have preached the doctrines of grace to my cost—that is, in a pecuniary aspect; and I know that it is so. I cannot find anything to rest upon in the modern theories, but this places me in antagonism to the supporters of the chapel. They find fault, not with the style of my preaching, but with the subjects of it." In another place the witness is—"Our minister is an able and gracious man, but there are those in the church who are determined that no one shall remain here unless he is in favor of advanced opinions." Yes, the divergence is every day becoming more manifest. A chasm is opening between the men who believe their Bibles and the men who are prepared for an advance upon Scripture. Inspiration and speculation cannot long abide in peace. Compromise there can be none. We cannot hold the inspiration of the Word, and yet reject it; we cannot believe in the atonement and deny it; we cannot hold the doctrine of the fall and yet talk of the evolution of spiritual life from human nature; we cannot recognize the punishment of the impenitent and yet indulge the "larger hope." One way or the other we must go. Decision is the virtue of the hour.

Neither when we have chosen our way can we keep company with those who go the other way. There must come with decision for truth a corresponding protest against error. Let those who will keep the narrow way keep it, and suffer for their choice; but to hope to follow the broad road at the same time is an absurdity. What communion hath Christ with Belial?

Thus far we come, and pause. Let us, as many as are of one mind, wait upon the Lord to know what Israel ought to do. With steadfast faith let us take our places; not in anger, not in the spirit of suspicion or division, but in watchfulness and resolve. Let us not pretend to a fellowship which we do not feel, nor hide convictions which are burning in our hearts. The times are perilous, and the responsibility of every individual believer is a burden which he must bear, or prove a traitor. What each man's place and course should be the Lord will make clear unto him.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

OCTOBER, 1887.

THE CASE PROBED

By C. H. Spurgeon.

THE controversy which has arisen out of our previous articles is very wide in its range. Different minds will have their own opinions as to the manner in which the combatants have behaved themselves; for our own part we are content to let a thousand personal matters pass by unheeded. What does it matter what sarcasms or pleasantries may have been uttered at our expense? The dust of battle will blow away in due time; for the present the chief concern is to keep the standard in its place, and bear up against the rush of the foe.

Our warning was intended to call attention to an evil which we thought was apparent to all: we never dreamed that “the previous question” would be raised, and that a company of esteemed friends would rush in between the combatants, and declare that there was no cause for war, but that our motto might continue to be “Peace, peace!” Yet such has been the case, and in many quarters the main question has been, not “How can we remove the evil?” but, “Is there any evil to remove?” No end of letters have been written with this as their theme—“*Are the charges made by Mr. Spurgeon at all true?*” Setting aside the question of our own veracity, we could have no objection to the most searching discussion of the matter. By all means let the truth be known.

The Baptist and *The British Weekly*, in the most friendly spirit, have opened their columns, and invited correspondence upon the point in band. The result has been that varied opinions have been expressed; but among the letters there has been a considerable number which may be roughly summarized as declaring that it would be best to let well alone, and that the writers see little or nothing of departure from the faith among Baptist and Congregational ministers. This is reassuring as far as it goes, but how far does it go? It goes no farther than this—it proves that these worthy men

view matters from a standpoint which makes them regard as mere changes of expression novelties which we judge to be fatal errors from the truth; or else they move in a peculiarly favored circle; or else they are so supremely amiable that they see all things through spectacles of tinted glass. We cannot help it, but in reading these carefully-prepared epistles, there has passed before our mind the vision of the heroic Nelson, with the telescope at his blind eye, and we have heard him say again and again, "I cannot see it." With a brave blindness he refused to see that which might have silenced his guns. Brethren who have been officials of a denomination have a paternal partiality about them which is so natural, and so sacred, that we have not the heart to censure it. Above all things, these prudent brethren feel bound to preserve the prestige of "the body," and the peace of the committee. Our Unions, Boards, and Associations are so justly dear to the fathers, that quite unconsciously and innocently, they grow oblivious of evils which, to the unofficial mind, are as manifest as the sun in the heavens. This could not induce our honored brethren to be untruthful; but it does influence them in their judgment, and still more in the expression of that judgment. With one or two exceptions in the letters now before us, there are evidences of a careful balancing of sentences, and a guardedness of statement, which enable us to read a good deal between the lines.

If we were not extremely anxious to avoid personalities, we could point to other utterances of some of these esteemed writers which, if they did not contradict what they have now written, would be such a supplement to it that their entire mind would be better known. To break the seal of confidential correspondence, or to reveal private conversations, would not occur to us; but we feel compelled to say that, in one or two cases, the writers have not put in print what we have personally gathered from them on other occasions. Their evident desire to allay the apprehensions of others may have helped them to forget their own fears. We say no more.

Had there been no other letters but those of this class, we should have hoped that perhaps the men of the new theology were few and feeble. Let it be noted that we have never made an estimate of their number or strength: we have said "many," and after reading the consoling letters of our optimistic brethren we try to hope that possibly they may not be so many as we feared. We should be rejoiced to believe that there were none at all, but our wish cannot create a fact. There is little in the letters which can affect our declarations, even if we read them in their most unqualified sense, and accept them as true. If twenty persons did *not* see a certain fact,

their *not* seeing cannot alter the conviction of a man in his senses who has seen it, has seen it for years, and is seeing it now. The witness rubs his eyes to see whether he is awake; and then, bewildered as he may be for a moment that so many good people are contradicting him, he still believes the evidence of his own senses in the teeth of them all. I believe in the conscientiousness of the divines and doctors of divinity who tell us that all is well, and I cannot but congratulate them upon their ability to be so serenely thankful for small mercies.

But over against the bearers of cheering news we have to set the far more numerous testimonies of those to whom things wear no such roseate hue. What we have said already is true, but it is a meager and feeble statement of the actual case, if we judge by the reports of our correspondents. We have been likened by one of our opponents to the boy in the fable who cried, "Wolf!" The parallel only fails in the all-important point that he cried "Wolf!" when there was none, and we are crying "Wolf!" when packs of them are howling so loudly that it would be superfluous for us to shout at all if a wretched indifferentism had not brought a deep slumber upon those who ought to guard the flocks. The evidence is to our mind so overwhelming that we thought that our statements only gave voice to a matter of common notoriety. Either we are dreaming, or our brethren are; let the godly judge who it is that is asleep. We consider that what we have written in former papers is quite sufficient to justify our earnest endeavor to arouse the churches; but as more proof is demanded we will give it. Our difficulty is to make a selection out of the mass of material before us, and we will not burden our readers with more than may suffice.

In the month of July last the secretaries of the Evangelical Alliance issued a circular, from which we quote a paragraph:—

"It is only too evident to all who are jealous for God and his truth, that on one side there is a perilous growth of superstition and sacerdotalism, and on the other, of unbelief and indifference to vital religion. The substitutionary sacrifice of our blessed Lord and Savior is lightly esteemed, and even repudiated, by some prominent teachers; the future destiny of the sinner has become, in consequence, a vain speculation in the thoughts of many. The plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the personality of the Holy Ghost, and his presence and power in the church of God, with other verities of the faith of Christ, are qualified or explained away in many instances. The results of this erroneous teaching and perversion of the

gospel are painfully apparent; worldliness, sensuality, and luxury, with the desecration of the Lord's day, abound, and Christian liberty has become license in the walk and conversation of many professed disciples of Christ."

This circular we had not seen or heard of when our first "Down-grade" article appeared in August. We had had no communication, directly or indirectly, with the Alliance. This Association has a Council, by no means fanatical or precipitate, and we are prepared to say, with no disrespect to the happy brethren who judge everything to be so eminently satisfactory, that we think as much of the judgment of this Council as we do of theirs. Possibly we now think far more of that opinion, since we have seen extracts from letters of brethren of all denominations, sent to the Alliance, in which they cry "Wolf!" in tones as earnest as our own.

There is no use in mincing matters: there are thousands of us in all denominations who believe that many ministers have seriously departed from the truths of the gospel, and that a sad decline of spiritual life is manifest in many churches. Many a time have others said the same things which we have now said, and small notice has been taken of their protests. Only this day we have received by post the Report of the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Association of Baptist Churches, issued in June last. It contains an admirable paper by its President, of which the keynote will be found in the following sentences:—

"We live in perilous times: we are passing through a most eventful period; the Christian world is convulsed; there is a mighty upheaval of the old foundations of faith; a great overhauling of old teaching. The Bible is made to speak to-day in a language which to our fathers would be an unknown tongue. Gospel teachings, the proclamation of which made men fear to sin, and dread the thought of eternity, are being shelved. Calvary is being robbed of its glory, sin of its horror, and we are said to be evolving into a reign of vigorous and blessed sentimentality, in which heaven and earth, God and man are to become a heap of sensational emotions; but in the process of evolution is not the power of the gospel weakened? Are not our chapels emptying? Is there not growing up among men a greater indifference to the claims of Christ? Are not the theories of evolution retrogressive in their effect upon the age? Where is the fiery zeal for the salvation of men which marked the Nonconformity of the past? Where is the noble enthusiasm that made heroes and martyrs for the truth? Where is

the force which carried Nonconformity forward like a mighty avalanche? Alas! where?"

Dr. David Brown, Principal of the Free Church College, Aberdeen, in a valuable paper upon Skepticism in Ministers, which will be found in *The Christian Age* of Sept. 14th, says:—

“This is a very covert form of skepticism, which is more to be feared than all other forms combined; I mean the skepticism of ministers of the gospel—of those who profess to hold, and are expected to preach, the faith of all orthodox Christendom, and, as the basis of this faith, the authority of Scripture; yet neither hold nor teach that faith, but do their best to undermine the sacred records of it. Now, what is the root of this kind of skepticism? I answer, just the same as of the more sweeping and naked forms of it, the desire to *naturalize*, as far as possible, everything in religion.”

“The one thing common to them all is the studious avoidance of all those sharp features of the gospel which are repulsive to the natural man—which ‘*are hid from the wise and prudent, and are revealed only to babes.*’ The divinity of Christ is recognized indeed; but it is the loftiness of his human character, the sublimity of his teaching, and the unparalleled example of self-sacrifice which his death exhibited that they dwelt on. The *Atonement* is not in so many words denied; but his sufferings are not held forth in their vicarious and expiatory character. Christ, according to their teaching, was in no sense our Substitute, and in justification the righteousness of the glorious Surety is not imputed to the guilty believer. It is not often that this is nakedly expressed. But some are becoming bold enough to speak it out.”

“I should not have said so much in this strain were it not that all our churches are honeycombed with this mischievous tendency to *minimize* all those features of the gospel which the natural man cannot receive. And no wonder, for their object seems to be to attract the natural mind. Wherever this is the case, the spirituality of the pulpit is done away, and the Spirit himself is not there. Conversion of souls

is rarely heard of there, if even it is expected, and those who come for the children’s bread get only a stone—beautiful it may be, and sparkling; but stones cannot be digested.”

We have occupied no time in selecting these three testimonies, neither are they more remarkable than a host of others; but they suffice to show that it

is not a solitary dyspeptic who alone judges that there is much evil occurrent.

The most conclusive evidence that we are correct in our statement, that “the new theology” is rampant among us, is supplied by *The Christian World*. To this paper is largely due the prevalence of this mischief; and it by no means hides its hand. Whoever else may hesitate, we have in this paper plain and bold avowals of its faith, or want of faith. Its articles and the letters which it has inserted prove our position up to the hilt; nay, more, they lead us into inner “chambers of imagery” into which little light has as yet been admitted. What is meant by the allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity in the extract which is now before us? We forbear further comment, the paragraph speaks very plainly for itself:—

“We are now at the parting of the ways, and the younger ministers especially must decide whether or not they will embrace and undisguisedly proclaim that ‘modern thought’ which in Mr. Spurgeon’s eyes is a ‘deadly cobra,’ while in ours it is the glory of the century. It discards many of the doctrines dear to Mr. Spurgeon and his school, not only as untrue and unscriptural, but as in the strictest sense immoral; for it cannot recognize the moral possibility of imputing either guilt or goodness, or the justice of inflicting everlasting punishment for temporary sin. It is not so irrational as to pin its faith to verbal inspiration, or so idolatrous as to make its acceptance of a true Trinity of divine manifestation cover polytheism.”

Nothing can be required more definite than this; and if there had been any such need, the letters which have been inserted in the same paper would have superabundantly supplied it. As several of these are from Baptist ministers, and are an ingenuous avowal of the most thorough-going advance from the things which have been assuredly believed among us, we are led to ask the practical question: *Are brethren who remain orthodox prepared to endorse such sentiments by remaining in union with those who hold and teach them?* These gentlemen have full liberty to think as they like; but, on the other hand, those who love the old gospel have equally the liberty to dissociate themselves from them, and that liberty also involves a responsibility from which there is no escaping. If we do not believe in Universalism, or in Purgatory, and if we do believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the Fall, and the great sacrifice of Christ for sin, it behoves us to see that we do not become accomplices with those who teach another gospel, and as it would seem from one writer, have avowedly another God.

A friendly critic advised us at the first to mention the names of those who had quitted the old faith; but, if we had done so, he would have been among the first to lament the introduction of personalities. At the same time, there can be no objection to a gentleman's coming forward, and glorying in his "modern thought": it spares others the trouble of judging his position, and it is an exhibition of manliness which others might copy to advantage. Those who have read the statements of the advanced school, and still think that from the orthodox point of view there is no cause for alarm, must surely be of a very sanguine temperament, or resolutely blind.

Our lament; was not, however, confined to vital doctrines; we mentioned a decline of spiritual life, and the growth of worldliness, and gave as two outward signs thereof the falling-off in prayer-meetings, and ministers attending the theater. The first has been pooh-poohed as a mere trifle. *The Nonconformist*, which is a fit companion for *The Christian World*, dismisses the subject in the following sentence: "If the conventional prayer-meetings are not largely attended, why should the Christian community be judged by its greater or less use of one particular religious expedient?" What would James and Jay have said of this dismissal of "conventional prayer-meetings," whatever that may mean? At any rate, we are not yet alone in the opinion that our meetings for prayer are very excellent thermometers of the spiritual condition of our people. God save us from the spirit which regards gathering together for prayer as "a religious expedient"! This one paragraph is sorrowfully sufficient to justify much more than we have written.

The same newspaper thus deals with our mention of theater-going preachers. Let the reader note what a fine mouthful of words it is, and how unwittingly it admits, with a guarded commendation, that which we remarked upon with censure:—

"As for theaters, while we should be much surprised to learn that many ministers of the gospel take a view of life which would permit them to spend much time there, yet, remembering that men of unquestionable piety do find recreation for themselves and their families in the drama, we are not content to see a great branch of art placed under a ban, as if it were no more than an agency of evil."

Let it never be forgotten that even irreligious men, who themselves enjoy the amusements of the theater, lose all respect for ministers when they see them in the play-house. Their common sense tells them that men of such an

order are unfit to be their guides in spiritual things. But we will not debate the point: the fact that it is debated is to us sufficient evidence that spiritual religion is at a low ebb in such quarters.

Very unwillingly have we fulfilled our unhappy task of justifying a warning which we felt bound to utter; we deplore the necessity of doing so; but if we have not in this paper given overwhelming evidence, it is from want of space, and want of will, and not from want of power. Those who have made up their minds to ignore the gravity of the crisis, would not be aroused from their composure though we told our tale in miles of mournful detail.

It only remains to remark that brethren who are afraid that great discouragement will arise out of our statements have our hearty sympathy so far as there is cause for such discouragement. Our heart would rejoice indeed if we could describe our Nonconformity in a very different manner, and assure our friends that we were never in a sounder or more hopeful condition. But encouragement founded upon fiction would lead to false hopes, and to ultimate dismay. Confidence in our principles is what is most to be relied on, next to confidence in God. Brave men will hold to a right cause none the less tenaciously because for a season it is under a cloud. Increased difficulty only brings out increased faith, more fervent prayer, and greater zeal. The weakest of minds are those which go forward because they are borne along by the throng; the truly strong are accustomed to stand alone, and are not cast down if they find themselves in a minority. Let no man's heart fail him because of the Philistine. This new enemy is doomed to die like those who have gone before him; only let him not be mistaken for a friend.

Deeply do we agree with the call of the more devout among the letter-writers for a more determined effort to spread the gospel. Wherever more can be done, let it be done at once, in dependence upon the Spirit of God. But it is idle to go down to the battle with enemies in the camp. With what weapons are we to go forth? If those which we have proved "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" are taken from us, what are we to do? How can those evangelize who have no evangel? What fruit but evil can come of "the new theology"? Let us know where we are. In the meantime, those of us who raise these questions are not among the idlers, nor are we a whit behind the very chief of those who seek to win souls.

Some words have been used which call the writer a Pope, and speak of this inquiry as an Inquisition. Nothing can be more silly. Is it come to this, that if we use our freedom to speak our mind we must needs be charged with arrogance? Is decision the same thing as Popery? It is playing with edged tools when the advanced men introduce that word, for we would remind them that there is another phase of Popery of which a portion of them have furnished us grievous examples. To hide your beliefs, to bring out your opinions cautiously, to use expressions in other senses than those in which they are usually understood, to “show,” as *The Christian World* so honestly puts it, “a good deal of trimming, and a balancing of opposite opinions in a way that is confusing and unsatisfactory to the hearer,” is a meaner sort of Popery than even the arrogance which is so gratuitously imputed to *us*. It is, however, very suggestive that the letting in of light upon men should be to them a torment equal to an Inquisition, and that open discussion should so spoil their schemes that they regard it as a torture comparable to the rack and the stake. What other harm have we done them? We would not touch a hair of their heads, or deprive them of an inch of liberty. Let them speak, that we may know them; but let them not deny us the same freedom; neither let them denounce us for defending what they are so eager to assail.

What action is to be taken we leave to those who can see more plainly than we do what Israel ought to do. One thing is clear to us: we cannot be expected to meet in any Union which comprehends those whose teaching is upon fundamental points exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear. Those who *can* do so will, no doubt, have weighty reasons with which to justify their action, and we will not sit in judgment upon those reasons: they may judge that a minority should not drive them out. To us it appears that there are many things upon which compromise is possible, but there are others in which it would be an act of treason to pretend to fellowship. With deep regret we abstain from assembling with those whom we dearly love and heartily respect, since it would involve us in a confederacy with those with whom we can have no communion in the Lord. Garibaldi complained that, by the cession of Nice to France, he had been made a foreigner in his native land; and our heart is burdened with a like sorrow; but those who banish us may yet be of another mind, and enable us to return.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

NOVEMBER, 1887.

A FRAGMENT UPON THE DOWN-GRADE CONTROVERSY.

By C. H. Spurgeon.

BY this time many of our readers will be weary of the Down-Grade controversy: they cannot be one-tenth so much tired of it, or tried by it, as we are. When the first article appeared, a friend wrote to warn us that he who touched this theme would gain no honor thereby, but would bring a host of enemies around him. We believed his prophecy, and with this as part of the reckoning we went on, for a solemn sense of duty impelled us. The result is not other than we looked for: the treatment our protest has received is neither better nor worse than we expected: possibly we have personally received more respect than we reckoned on.

Hitherto (and this matter is now merely in its beginning), the chief answer has come from the public teachers, and as far as their public answer is concerned, it amounts, at its best interpretation, to the admission that there may be a little amiss, but not enough to speak about. They are sorry that a few brethren go rather too far, but they are dear brethren still. Many good men lament the fact that liberty is, in certain instances, degenerating into license, but they solace themselves with the belief that on the whole it is a sign of health and vigor: the bough is so fruitful that it runs over the wall. At any rate, denominational peace must be kept up, and there must be no discordant charge of defection to break the chorus of mutual congratulation.

The intense desire for union has its commendable side, and we are far from undervaluing it. Precious also is the protest for liberty, which certain valorous souls have lifted up. We rejoice that our brethren will not submit their consciences to any man; but the mercy is that we do not know of any man who desires that they should. Specially is the object of their brave

opposition as free from a desire to rule over them as from the wish to be ruled by them. It is a pity that such loyalty to liberty could not be associated with an equally warm expression of resolve to be loyal to Christ and his gospel. It would be a grievous fault if the sons of the Puritans did not maintain the freedom of their consciences; but it will be no less a crime if they withdraw those consciences from under the yoke of Christ.

To pursue union at the expense of truth is treason to the Lord Jesus. If we are prepared to enter into solemn league and covenant for the defense of the crown-rights of King Jesus, we cannot give up the crown-jewels of his gospel for the sake of a larger charity. He is our Master and Lord, and we will keep his words: to tamper with his doctrine would be to be traitors to himself. Yet, almost unconsciously, good men and true may drift into compromises which they would not at first propose, but which they seem forced to justify. Yielding to be the creatures of circumstances, they allow another to gird them, and lead them whither they would not; and when they wake up, and find themselves in an undesirable condition, they have not always the resolution to break away from it. Especially in the company of their equally-erring brethren, they are not inclined to consider their ways, and are not anxious to have them remarked upon; and, therefore, in this brief paper we venture to make an earnest appeal from brethren assembled, to brethren at home in their studies quietly turning over the matter.

As much as possible we beg them to forget the obnoxious reprovor, and to look the state of affairs carefully in the face, and see if it strikes them as it does us. We will put it plainly, not to provoke, but to be understood.

As a matter of fact, believers in Christ's atonement are now in declared religions union with those who make light of it; believers in Holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death, and a future restitution for the lost. Yes, we have before us the wretched spectacle of professedly orthodox Christians publicly avowing their union with those who deny the faith, and scarcely concealing their contempt for those who cannot be guilty of such gross disloyalty to Christ. To be very plain, we are unable to call these things Christian Unions, they begin to look like Confederacies in Evil. Before the face of God we fear that they

wear no other aspect. To our inmost heart, this is a sad truth from which we cannot break away.

It is lawful to unite with all sorts of men for good and benevolent and necessary purposes, even as at a fire, Pagan and Papist and Protestant may each one hand on the buckets and in a sinking ship, heathen and Christian alike are bound to take turns at the pumps. For useful, philanthropical, and political purposes, united action is allowable among men of the most diverse views in religion. But the case before us is that of a distinctly religious communion, a professed fellowship in Christ. Is this to be made so wide that those who contradict each other on vital points may yet pretend to be at one?

Furthermore, we should greatly object to the shifting about for heresy which some speak of; but in this case the heresy is avowed, and is thrust forward in no diffident style. No words could be more explicit had they been selected as a challenge. We have not to deal with those tares which were like the wheat, but with thorns and thistles which declare themselves openly. Whether the Down-Grade evil has operated on few or many is a question which may be waived: it has operated manifestly enough upon some, and they glory in it. Yet professedly sound believers are in full accord with these outspokenly heterodox men, and are linked with them in set and formal union. Is this according to the mind of the God of truth?

The largest charity towards those who are loyal to the Lord Jesus, and yet do not see with us on secondary matters, is the duty of all true Christians. But how are we to act towards those who deny his vicarious sacrifice, and ridicule the great truth of justification by his righteousness? These are not mistaken friends, but enemies of the cross of Christ. There is no use in employing circumlocutions and polite terms of expression:—where Christ is not received as to the cleansing power of his blood and the justifying merit of his righteousness, he is not received at all.

It used to be generally accepted in the Christian Church that the line of Christian communion was drawn hard and fast, at the Deity of our Lord; but even this would appear to be altered now. In various ways the chasm has been bridged, and during the past few years several ministers have crossed into Unitarianism, and have declared that they perceived little or no difference in the two sides of the gulf. In all probability there was no difference to perceive in the regions where they abode. It is our solemn conviction that where there can be no real spiritual communion there

should be no pretense of fellowship. *Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin.* Those who know and love the truth of God cannot have fellowship with that which is diametrically opposed thereto, and there can be no reason why they should pretend that they have such fellowship.

We cheerfully admit that among men who possess the divine life, and a consequent discernment of truth, there will be differences of attainment and perception; and that these differences are no barriers to love and union. But it is another matter when we come to receiving or rejecting the vicarious sacrifice and the justifying righteousness of our Lord. We who believe Holy Scripture to be the inspired truth of God cannot have fellowship with those who deny the authority from which we derive all our teaching. We go to our pulpits to save a fallen race, and believe that they must be saved in this life, or perish for ever: how can we profess brotherhood with those who deny the fall of man, and hold out to him the hope of another probation after death? They have all the liberty in the world, and we would be the last to abridge it; but that liberty cannot demand our co-operation. If these men believe such things, let them teach them, and construct churches, unions, and brotherhoods for themselves! Why must they come among us? When they enter among us at unawares, and are resolved to stay, what can we do? The question is not soon answered; but, surely, in no case will we give them fellowship, or profess to do so.

During the past month many have put to us the anxious question, “*What shall we do?*” To these we have had no answer to give except that each one must act for himself after seeking direction of the Lord. In our own case we intimated our course of action in last month’s paper. We retire at once and distinctly from the Baptist Union. The Baptist Churches are each one of them self-contained and independent. The Baptist Union is only a voluntary association of such churches, and it is a simple matter for a church or an individual to withdraw from it. The Union, as at present constituted, has no disciplinary power, for it has no doctrinal basis whatever, and we see no reason why every form of belief and misbelief should not be comprehended in it so long as immersion only is acknowledged as baptism. There is no use in blaming the Union for harboring errors of the extremest kind, for, so far as we can see, it is powerless to help itself, if it even wished to do so. Those who originally founded it made it “without form and void,” and so it must remain. At least, we do not see any likelihood of a change. A large number have this state of things in admiration, and will go on with it; we have no such

admiration, and therefore have ceased from it. But we want outsiders to know that we are in nowise altered in our faith, or in our denominational position. As a baptized believer, our place is where it has ever been.

Why not start a new Denomination? This is not a question for which we have any liking. There are denominations enough. If there were a new denomination formed the thieves and robbers who have entered other “gardens walled round” would climb into this also, and so nothing would be gained. Besides, the expedient is not needed among churches which are each one self-governing and self-determining: such churches can find their own affinities without difficulty, and can keep their own coasts clear of invaders. Since each vessel is seaworthy in herself, let the hampering ropes be cut clean away, and no more lines of communication be thrown out until we know that we are alongside a friend who sails under the same glorious flag. In the isolation of independency, tempered by the love of the Spirit which binds us to all the faithful in Christ Jesus, we think the lovers of the gospel will for the present find their immediate safety. Oh, that the day would come when, in a larger communion than any sect can offer, all those who are one in Christ may be able to blend in manifest unity! This can only come by the way of growing spiritual life, clearer light upon the one eternal truth, and a closer cleaving in all things to him who is the Head, even Christ Jesus.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

DECEMBER, 1887.

RESTORATION OF TRUTH AND REVIVAL.

By C. H. Spurgeon.

OH for a great and general revival of true religion! Not a burst of mere excitement, but a real awakening, a work of the Eternal Spirit. This would be a glorious reply to skepticism, and would act like a strong wind in clearing the air, and driving away the miasmata which lurk in the stagnant atmosphere. There would then be small honor paid to men who mar the gospel of our Lord, and truth, which has fallen in our streets, would again ascend her throne. Let us pray for such a visitation of the Holy Ghost with our whole souls. It is not only desirable, it is essential; we must either be revived by the Lord himself, or the churches will descend until error and ungodliness swallow them up. This calamity shall not happen but only divine grace can avert it.

At the same time, we cannot expect a gracious revival till we are clear of complicity with the deadening influences which are all around us. A man of God writes us: "You cannot well overstate the spiritual death and dearth which prevail in the provinces. Where the 'minister is successful' no Unitarian would be offended with the preaching, and where 'not successful,' we see a miserably superficial handling of the Word, without power. Of course there are valuable exceptions. What can be expected as to spirituality in the church when deacons are better acquainted with 'Hamlet,' and Irving's actings, than with the Word of God? And what about the next age, when the children are treated to pantomimes, and a taste is created for these things?" This brother's lamentation is of a piece with hosts of others which load our table. They come from men who are second to none in spiritual weight. Either these brethren are dreaming, or they are located in specially bad places; or else there is grievous cause for

humiliation. We will not go deep into this question, it is too painful. The extent to which sheer frivolity and utterly inane amusement have been carried in connection with some places of worship would almost exceed belief. We call the attention of our readers to the fact that *doctrine* has been the ground of battle in the Down-Grade struggle which has been chosen by our opponents, but on the matter of prayer-meetings and worldliness they have been prudently silent. Certain of them have in this affair exhibited that discretion which is the better part of valor.

If any of our churches have been guilty in this respect, how can they expect the divine Spirit to work with them? Wherever the statement which we have quoted, or a similar one, can be proved, we are at a loss to know how conversions can be looked for. The Lord our God is holy, and he cannot compromise his own glorious name by working with persons whose groveling tastes lead them to go to Egypt—we had almost said to Sodom—for their recreations. Is this walking with God? Is this the manner in which Enochs are produced?

It is a heart-sorrow to have to mention such things, but the work of the Lord must be done faithfully, and this evil must be laid bare. There can be no doubt that all sorts of entertainments, as nearly as possible approximating to stage-plays, have been carried on in connection with places of worship, and are, at this present time, in high favor. Can these things promote holiness, or help in communion with God? Can men come away from such things and plead with God for the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of believers? We loathe to touch the unhallowed subject; it seems so far removed from the walk of faith, and the way of heavenly fellowship. In some cases the follies complained of are even beneath the dignity of manhood, and fitter for the region of the imbecile than for thoughtful men.

Brethren in Christ, in every church let us purge out the things which weaken and pollute. It is clear to every one who is willing to see it that laxity of doctrine is either the parent of worldliness, or is in some other way very near akin to it. The men who give up the old faith are the same persons who plead for latitude as to general conduct. The Puritan is not more notorious for his orthodoxy than for his separateness from the world. Liberal divines do not always command the respect of the public, but they gain a certain popularity by pandering to prevailing tastes. The ungodly world is so far on their side that it commends them for their liberality, and

rails at the orthodox as bigots and kill-joys. It is a very suspicious circumstance that very often the less a man knows of the inner life, and the less he even cares to speak of it, the more heartily he is for the new theology, the theory of evolution, and the condemnation of all settled doctrine. Those who would have a blessing from the Lord must avoid all this, and determine to follow the Lord fully. Not only must they quit false doctrine, but they must receive the gospel, not as dogma, but as vital truth. Only as the truth is attended with living faith will it prove its own royal power. Believers must also sweep the house of the leaven of worldliness, and the frivolities of a giddy generation. The evil which is now current eats as doth a canker, and there is no hope for healthy godliness until it is cut out of the body of the church by her again repenting, and doing her first works.

Those who through divine grace have not defiled their garments must not content themselves with censuring others, but must arouse themselves to seek a fuller baptism of the Spirit of God. Perhaps these evils are permitted that they may act as a sieve upon the heap gathered on the Lord's threshing-floor. Possibly they are allowed that our apathetic churches may be aroused. We know already of several cases in which true ministers have gone over the foundation truths again with their people, and have preached the saving Word with clearer emphasis. In other cases churches have been summoned to special prayer about this matter. This is a good beginning: let it be carried out on the widest scale. As one man let us cry mightily unto the Lord our God, that he would arise and plead his own cause. Now, if never before, let those who are loyal to Jesus and his Word be up and doing. A boundless blessing is waiting for the asking. We believe in prayer.

LET US PRAY LIKE ELJAH'S.

In reference to the Down-Grade controversy and the Baptist Union, we are urged to further action; but it would be far easier to take a foolish step than to retrace it. We will move when we are moved, and not before. Conferences, societies, and leagues are proposed: all are admirable, no doubt; but which out of many suggestions is the most suitable? We do not see our way. May the Lord himself direct his people! Meanwhile, to redouble our prayers, and to seek a revival in all our churches, cannot possibly be a mistake. Prayer, mighty prayer, can do wonders. This is *the* work of the present hour. Pray without ceasing, and preach the faithful Word in clearer terms than ever. Such a course of conduct may seem to

some to be a sort of standing still and doing nothing, but in very truth it is bringing God into the battle; and when HE comes to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, he will make short work of it. "Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause!"

NOTES.

(DEC. 1887)

THE very first thing must be to speak up for our orphans concerning their treat for Christmas. Just before leaving England we had boys and girls together, such a company, and we had a little treat; but we promised that, whether C. H. S. could be with them on Christmas-day or not, we would try and make it a glorious day for them. Will our friends again bedeck the tables of the fatherless on the day of universal joy? The friend who used to give a new shilling to every orphan is not now able to do it: for which we are truly sorry. Is there no other large heart endowed with a large purse? It takes £25 to give a shilling each all round, but it is such a help for pocket-money for quite a time after, that we would like to keep it up. Ladies and gentlemen, between the ages of 99 and 4, all and sundry of you, we, the Stockwell five hundred, both lads and lasses, will thank you if, by gifts of money, or goods, you will help us to a happy Christmas-day in 1887. Thank you five hundred times over for having done so in years gone by. Mrs. Spurgeon will be glad to receive the Christmas money-gifts, and to reply for us. Presents in kind should be directed to Mr. Charlesworth, at The Orphanage, Stockwell.

The Sword and the Trowel volume for 1887 will be ready on Jan. 1. It has made history and recorded it. At five shillings it is not dear, and it makes a fine addition to a library.

Messrs. Hollings and Brock, of 22, Paternoster Row, are the advertisement agents for this magazine, and they ask us to note the large number of literary advertisements contained in this month's wrapper. All sorts of good things are mentioned; indeed, they make up quite a complete catalogue of Christmas requirements in the line of books, cards, etc. We hope friends will patronize them. The publishers are ever ready to advertise with us, because they value our notices of their books. Necessarily short, our remarks are not, therefore, superficial: the utmost care is taken to

judge correctly. We are not infallible, but we are indefatigable. Of course, our point of view is well known, and we do not pretend to look from any other; but a plain and honest statement of opinion is evidently valued, even though at times it may be unfavorable, and therefore may be considered severe. We never yet heard of a drummer who could flog a man so that he liked it, and therefore we do not expect sharp criticism to be admired by the author who receives it; but, on the whole, we have been graciously tolerated even by those who have been disappointed.

The following letter was read at the Tabernacle on Sunday, November 13:—

“Dear Friends at Tabernacle,—I have only left you a few days, but I am already rested by anticipation of rest to come. I wish to thank you all most heartily for your constancy of love during four-and-thirty years of fellowship. We have been many in number, but only one in heart, all through these years. Specially is this true in the present hour of controversy, for my heartiest sympathizers are in my own church. Several enthusiastic ones proposed a general meeting of church-members, to express their fervent agreement with their Pastor: but the ever-faithful deacons and elders had taken time by the forelock, and presented to me a letter signed by them all as representing their brethren and sisters. Such unity comes from the grace of God, proves that his blessing is now with us, and prophesies future happiness. What can I do but thank you all, love you in return, labor for you as long as strength remains, and pray for you till I die? The infinite blessing of the Eternal God be with you for ever!

“Your grateful Pastor,

“C H. SPURGEON.”

We give the document alluded to in the above letter. It would have been worded far more strongly, but the Pastor is always for great brevity in expressions concerning himself, and his wishes caused many a glowing paragraph to be struck out. There was a general feeling that the officers would like to make the utterance more forcible; but they added that even then it would fall far short of the warmth of their feelings.

“Metropolitan Tabernacle,
“Newington, S.E.,

“October 27th, 1887.

“Resolved:—’That we, the deacons and elders of the church, worshipping in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, hereby tender to our beloved Pastor, C. H. Spurgeon, our deep sympathy with him in the circumstances that have led to his withdrawal from the Baptist Union. And we heartily concur in our sincere appreciation of the steadfast zeal with which he maintains the doctrines of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in their inspired and apostolic simplicity.”“

Signed by the Co-Pastor, together with all the Deacons and Elders.

At subsequent meetings the above was not deemed adequately to express the affection, confidence, and esteem cherished by all the church officers towards their beloved Pastor and leader, they, therefore, unanimously agreed to the following addition:—

“Our former resolution was passed with unanimous and unhesitating concurrence. But, touching only on one point, it was generally thought inadequate to convey to you, our dear Pastor, a full sense of the affection, the confidence, and the esteem in which you are held by us all. Of this, however, we can offer you no more fitting exposition than the readiness of each and every one to approve ourselves as ‘Helps’ in the diversified gifts, administrations, and operations of the Holy Spirit with which you have, after the divine order, been so largely entrusted.

“And it may not be altogether inappropriate, or inopportune, to record our conviction that you have done good service, on a wide and constantly-widening scale, by affirming the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; by inculcating the doctrines of grace, as taught by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ under the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God; and by preserving in our midst the uncorrupted simplicity of public worship.

“Permit us to add our fervent hope, and our devout prayer, that your vigorous protests against the innovations of ‘modern thought’ in pulpits supposed to be orthodox, will eventually largely promote the unity of the churches of Christ throughout the world.”

Certain antagonists have tried to represent the Down-Grade controversy as a revival of the old feud between Calvinists and Arminians. It is nothing of the kind. Many evangelical Arminians are as earnestly on our side as men can be. We do not conceal our own Calvinism in the least; but this conflict is for truths which are common to all believers. This is no battle over words, but it deals with the eternal verities—those foundation truths which belong not exclusively to this party or to that. It is of no use attempting to drag this red herring across our path: we can argue other points and maintain Christian harmony at the same time: but with those who treat the Bible as waste paper, and regard the death of Christ as no substitution, we have no desire for fellowship. We have come out in earnest protest, and feel great content of conscience in having done so.

The barefaced manner in which certain persons assert that to separate from men who hold vital errors is contrary to the mind of Christ, would be amusing if it were not saddening. They write as if such a Book as the New Testament were not in existence: they evidently decide what the mind of Christ ought to be, without referring to such poor creatures as the apostles. As for us, we think more of Paul and John than of the whole body of modern thinkers. What saith the Scriptures? “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (2 John 10, 11.) “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8, 9.) The spirit of Scripture is one, and therefore we may be sure that decision for truth, and separation from the erring, are in full consistency with the charity of 1 Corinthians 13, to which we are so continually pointed. It is true charity to those who err to refuse to aid and abet them in their errors. “Charity” sounds very prettily in the mouths of those who wish to screen themselves, but, if they had exercised it in the past, they might not have driven us out from among the people, to whom we naturally belong.

Whether other ministers are going to leave the Union also remains to be seen. We do not expect that they will do so; but we trust that, if they remain, they will resolve that reform shall be carried out, and truth vindicated.

PREFACE.

1888

WHETHER, WE SMITE WITH *THE SWORD*, OR BUILD WITH *THE TROWEL*,

LET THE LORD'S NAME BE MAGNIFIED.

Our service may often change, but our spirit should remain full of adoration and praise. The century grows old, but the glory of Jehovah is ever new. The twilight of another age is upon us; but come what will, the Lord is to be extolled from generation to generation, even till eternity has swallowed up the last of years.

During another year the Lord has been exceedingly gracious to the various institutions of which this magazine is the representative and right hand. Our practical protest against error has lost us many a friend; or, rather, has winnowed away much of the chaff from the heap of our acquaintances. Naturally, it might have been expected that this would tell upon the funds of the Orphanage, College, Colportage, Evangelists' Society, or some other of our agencies; but our resources are beyond the reach of human power, seeing we have all along drawn our supplies direct from the Fountain-head. We have received, not less, but more of pecuniary supplies, since certain great ones threatened to dry up the springs. They cannot stay so much as a drop of heaven's rain from the plant of the Lord's right hand planting. For this, with a deep, adoring reverence, we say emphatically, "The Lord be magnified."

But what of it all? Will any result follow from taking up a position of stern protest? We think so. We believe that already a drag has been put upon the "Down-Grade" wheel, and that inquiry has been aroused which will more effectually hinder the deplorable advance to ruin. But if not, what of that? Suppose a man should speak the truth in the name of the Lord, and no one should believe him; suppose that good as well as bad should judge him to be perverse and pragmatism; suppose he should be forsaken by those who were once his adherents and friends; and suppose that he should even die

with the ill repute of being one who needlessly and in vain troubled Israel—what then? If in that which he had spoken he was true to his conscience, and to his God, what would he have lost by receiving no recognition from men? Lost! He would have been immeasurably the gainer, inasmuch as he would not have received his reward, but his crown would be laid up in heaven “against that day.” At any rate, he would have glorified his Lord by having been enabled to say, “Although ministers should not proclaim the gospel, nor professors confess the faith; the constancy of the faithful shall fail, and even the most godly abide in cowardly silence; courage shall fail from the brave, and decision from the instructed; yet will I rejoice in the Lord and his eternal truth, yea, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

For practical purposes, in this cloudy and dark day, we call upon our brethren to be much in prayer for the revival and enlightenment of the church of God, and for the creation of religious interest among the great multitude. Everywhere there is apathy. Nobody cares whether that which is preached is true or false. A sermon is a sermon whatever the subject; only, the shorter it is the better. A free delivery, with a little pretentiousness, will make a great deal go down as gospel which the slightest gracious discrimination would utterly reject. Let us pray that religious life may be deepened and increased, so that men may instinctively discern between the precious and the vile.

Now also is the season for a clearer and more distinct enunciation of the foundation truths of the gospel. Preachers and teachers should go over again with distinctness and emphasis those glorious doctrines which are assuredly received among us. The preaching of the true is the best refutation of the false. The more the mind of God is made known among the people the less will they be swayed by the inventions of the mind of man. A diligent rehearsal of the main points of our heavenly charter will be wise and timely at this present.

For this magazine we ask the favorable remembrance of our readers, How could the protesting voice have been heard if it had not been for these pages? As a rule, the religions papers have united in a conspiracy of silence; or else they have culled from their correspondence letters unfavorable to the truth, and have printed them, while those which were on the right side have been excluded. It is of vital importance that every mouth which bears testimony for truth should be preserved. This much-sneered-at

Sword and Trowel will carry on its twofold mission so long as its Editor has breath remaining; but it could do far more if its circulation were increased. The next year will be its twenty-fifth, and it ought to have a kind of Jubilee. To increase the circulation may seem a small matter to speak of, and yet it is not so. What is the use of a man speaking or writing if he has no audience? If an audience is desirable, is it not desirable that it should be increased? If his listeners and readers can be multiplied, is not the man thus enabled to do good on a wider scale? What is worth doing for a few is still more worth doing for many. We therefore invite our readers' help to enlarge our constituency. We will do our best to produce the magazine, and to speak boldly for the cause and kingdom of our Lord Jesus; and we ask on the part of our subscribers that they will provide for us open doors by introducing our monthly magazine to their friends and neighbors.

To most of our readers we are bound for ever by ties of gratitude for kindness rendered in many ways. Perhaps no man ever had such a host of constant and earnest friends as the Editor of this paper. To them all we send hearty greetings. God bless them all! May the eternal God be their refuge and their reward! In a short time we shall meet where *Sword and Trowel* shall be exchanged for harp and palm. So speedily will that day arrive that we joyously anticipate it, and would begin at once the heavenly fellowship which will express itself in the perfect harmony of the celestial song. As we said in the beginning, so say we at the close of this preface to the volume for 1888—

THE LORD BE MAGNIFIED.

The Lord liveth and reigneth: there is no defeat with him. No rage of the enemy can dim the luster of his truth, or hinder the going forth of his power.

HALLELUJAH!

THE BAPTIST UNION CENSURE.

(FEBRUARY 1888)

By C. H. Spurgeon

THE censure passed upon me by the Council of the Baptist Union will be weighed by the faithful, and estimated at its true value. "Afterwards they have no more that they can do." I brought no charges before the members of the Council, because they could only judge by their constitution, and that document lays down no doctrinal basis except the belief that "the immersion of believers is the only Christian baptism." Even the mention of evangelical sentiments has been cut out from their printed program. No one can be heterodox under this constitution, unless he should forswear his baptism. I offered to pay the fee for Counsel's opinion upon this matter, but my offer was not accepted by the deputation. There was, therefore, nothing for me to work upon, whatever evidence I might bring. What would be the use of exposing myself to threatened law-suits to gain nothing at all? Whatever may be said to the contrary, if we go to its authorized declaration of principles, it is clear that the Union is incompetent for any doctrinal judgment, except it should be needful to ascertain a person's views on baptism. I decline to submit to it any case which would be quite beyond its powers. Would any rational man act otherwise? I have rather too much proof than too little; but I am not going to involve others in litigation when nothing is to be gained.

I do not complain of the censure of the Council, or feel the least care about it. But was this the intent of its *loving* resolution? Is this the claw which was concealed by the velvet pad of its vote to send four doctors of divinity to me "to deliberate how the unity of the denomination can be maintained in truth, and love, and good works"? Did those who passed that resolution mean—we send these four men to put him to the question? Why, then, did they not say so? Did the world ever hear of such a result of a "deliberation"? The person with whom they deliberate upon union "in truth, and love, and good works" is questioned and condemned! Let plain-sailing Christian men judge between me and this Council.

The question now to be answered is—"Does this decision represent the opinion of the Baptist Union?" It may be so. It may be that the Council is elected in such a manner that it is fairly representative. It may be that the churches will admire the conduct of their prominent men. I do not believe it. It is not for me, as an outsider, to raise the question; but surely there are members of the Union who will consider it, and act accordingly.

I have, in simple brotherly kindness, given the advice which was asked of me; but had I known the secret object of the deputation from the Council, I would not have given it any advice of any sort. These gentlemen came, avowedly, to me to deliberate upon "unity in truth, and love, and good works"; but their real errand was not what was openly avowed. What they were driving at is made clear by the facts. Before considering as a Council the advice which, in any fair English construction of the words, was the object aimed at, they censure the man with whom they professed to deliberate. How is this consistent with itself? It is quite as well that their resolutions should be as incomprehensible as their doctrinal position is indefinable. But this goes far to render my recommendations useless. Is it not a waste of breath to deliberate under such circumstances? When language is used rather to conceal a purpose than to express it, it becomes fearfully doubtful whether any form of doctrine can be so worded as to be of the slightest use. Nevertheless, I would like all Christendom to know that all I asked of the Union is that it be formed on a Scriptural basis; and that I never sought to intrude upon it any Calvinistic or other personal creed, but only that form of belief which has been accepted for many years by the Evangelical Alliance, which includes members of well-nigh all Christian communities.

To this it was replied that there is an objection to any creed whatever. This is a principle which one may fairly discuss. Surely, what we believe may be stated, may be written, may be made known; and what is this but to make and promulgate a creed? Baptists from the first have issued their confessions of faith. Even the present Baptist Union itself has a creed about baptism, though about nothing else. The churches of which it is composed have nearly all of them a creed of some sort, and the very men who object to a creed many of them hold offices which require adhesion to certain doctrines, implied, if not actually written down. Trust-deeds of chapels and colleges usually have some doctrinal declaration; and how persons who hold positions connected with churches and institutions having creeds can fairly object to them when they meet in a united character, I am quite

unable to see. Certain members of the Council talk about having expelled Unitarians: does not this admit that they have already an unwritten Trinitarian creed? Why not print it? Possibly “modern thought” has methods of getting over this which have never occurred to my unsophisticated mind.

To say that “a creed comes between a man and his God,” is to suppose that it is not true; for truth, however definitely stated, does not divide the believer from his Lord. So far as I am concerned, that which I believe I am not ashamed to state in the plainest possible language; and the truth I hold I embrace because I believe it to be the mind of God revealed in his infallible Word. How can it divide me from God who revealed it? It is one means of my communion with my Lord, that I receive his words as well as himself, and submit my understanding to what I see to be taught by him. Say what he may, I accept it because he says it, and therein pay him the humble worship of my inmost soul.

I am unable to sympathize with a man who says he has no creed; because I believe him to be in the wrong by his own showing. He ought to have a creed. What is equally certain, he has a creed—he must have one, even though he repudiates the notion. His very unbelief is, in a sense, a creed.

The objection to a creed is a very pleasant way of concealing objection to discipline, and a desire for latitudinarianism. What is wished for is a Union which will, like Noah’s Ark, afford shelter both for the clean and for the unclean, for creeping things and winged fowls.

Every Union, unless it is a mere fiction, must be based upon certain principles. How can we unite except upon some great common truths? And the doctrine of baptism by immersion is not sufficient for a groundwork. Surely, to be a Baptist is not everything. If I disagree with a man on ninety-nine points, but happen to be one with him in baptism, this can never furnish such ground of unity as I have with another with whom I believe in ninety-nine points, and only happen to differ upon one ordinance. To form a union with a single Scriptural ordinance as its sole distinctive reason for existence has been well likened to erecting a pyramid upon its apex: the whole edifice must sooner or later come down. I am not slow to avow my conviction that the immersion of believers is the baptism of Holy Scripture, but there are other truths beside this; and I cannot feel fellowship with a man because of this, if in other matters he is false to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

To alter the foundation of a building is a difficult undertaking. Underpinning is expensive and perilous work. It might be more satisfactory to take the whole house down, and reconstruct it. If I had believed that the Baptist Union could be made a satisfactory structure, I could not then have remained in it; because to do so would have violated my conscience. But *my* conscience is no guide for others. Those who believe in the structure, and think that they can rectify its foundation, have my hearty sympathy in the attempt. Let them give themselves to it earnestly and with firm resolve: they will have need of all their earnestness and resolution. In the Assembly, in the Associations, and in the churches they can urge their views, and make it plain that they mean to make the Union an avowedly Evangelical body on the old lines of faith. This they must do boldly, and without flinching. I have no very assured hope of their success, for the difficulties are exceedingly great; but let them combine, and work unitedly, and persistently, year after year, and they may do something, if not everything. It is not for me to lead in a work which I have been forced to abandon; but there are other men who are less known, but not less resolute, and these should take their turn. The warfare has been made too personal; and certain incidents in it, upon which I will not dwell, have made it too painful for me to feel any pleasure in the idea of going on with it. It might even appear that I desired to be reinstated in the Union, or wished to head a party in it, and this is very far from my mind. But let no man imagine that I shall cease from my protests against false doctrine, or lay down the sword of which I have thrown away the scabbard. However much invited to do so, I shall not commence personalities, nor disclose the wretched facts in all their details; but with confirmatory evidence perpetually pouring in upon me, and a solemn conviction that the dark conspiracy to overthrow the truth must be dragged to light, I shall not cease to expose doctrinal declension wherever I see it. With the Baptist Union, as such, I have now no hampering connection; but so far as it takes its part in the common departure from the truth, it will have to put up with my strictures, although it has so graciously kicked me under pretext of deliberation.

Will those who are with me in this struggle remember me in their constant prayers to the Lord, whom in this matter I serve in my soul and spirit?

NOTES.

(MARCH 1888)

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.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

APRIL, 1888.

PROGRESSIVE THEOLOGY

By C. H. Spurgeon

IN this age of progress, religious opinions move at railway speed. Within the last few weeks many have made an open advance of a very special kind; we say an *open* advance, for we suspect that secretly they had for a long time harbored the errors which now they have avowed. And what a revelation it is! Here, one sees a "Moderate" declaring his advance to "another gospel" in the boldest terms; and there, another, highly esteemed for his supposed love of the truth, stubbing it after the subtle manner of its most malicious foes. While some of the most perverted cunningly endeavor to appear orthodox, others of a braver nature come out in their true colors, and astonish us with the glaring hue of their heresy. That which makes manifest is light; and, however much we may deplore the unwelcome discoveries of the present controversy, we ought to be thankful that they are made, for it is better for us to know where we are, and with whom we are associating.

The idea of a progressive gospel seems to have fascinated many. To us that notion is a sort of cross-breed between nonsense and blasphemy. After the gospel has been found effectual in the eternal salvation of untold multitudes, it seems rather late in the day to alter it; and, since it is the revelation of the all-wise and unchanging God, it appears somewhat audacious to attempt its improvement. When we call up before our mind's eye the gentlemen who have set themselves this presumptuous task, we feel half inclined to laugh; the case is so much like the proposal of moles to improve the light of the sun. Their gigantic intellects are to hatch out the meanings of the Infinite! We think we see them brooding over hidden truths to which they lend the aid of their superior genius to accomplish their development!

Hitherto they have not hatched out much worth rearing. Their chickens are so much of the Roman breed, that we sometimes seriously suspect that, after all, Jesuitical craft may be at the bottom of this “modern thought.” It is singular that, by the way of free-thought, men should be reaching the same end as others arrived at by the path of superstition. Salvation by works is one distinctive doctrine of the new gospel: in many forms this is avowed and gloried in—not, perhaps, in exact words, but in declarations quite unmistakable. The Galatian heresy is upon us with a vengeance: in the name of virtue and morality, justification by faith and salvation by free grace are bitterly assailed. Equally a child of darkness is this New Purgatory. It is taught that men *can* escape if they neglect the great salvation. No longer is the call, “Today, if ye will hear his voice”; for the tomorrow of the next state will answer quite as well. Of course, if men may be gradually upraised from sin and ruin in the world to come, common humanity would lead us to pray that the process may go on rapidly. We are hearing every now and again of “a night of prayers for the dead,” among certain priests of the Establishment. Nor is it among Ritualists alone, or even mainly, for the other day, at a meeting for prayer, an eminent believer in this notion prayed heartily for the devil; and his prayer, upon the theory of the restitution of all the sinful, was most natural. Prayers for the dead and prayers for the devil! Shades of Knox and Latimer, where are ye? How easy will it be to go from prayers for the dead to payment to good men for special supplications on their behalf! Of course if a devout person will spend an hour in praying a deceased wife out of her miseries, a loving husband will not let him exercise his supplications for nothing. It would be very mean of him if he did. “Purgatory Pick-purse,” as our Protestant forefathers called it, is upon us again, having entered by the back-door of infidel speculation instead of by the front entrance of pious opinion.

Nor is this all; for our “improvers” have pretty nearly obliterated the hope of such a heaven as we have all along expected. Of course, the reward of the righteous is to be of no longer continuance than the punishment of the wicked. Both are described as “everlasting” in the same verse, spoken by the same sacred lips; and as the “punishment” is made out to be only “age-lasting,” so must the “life” be. Worse even than this, if worse can be, it is taught by some of these “improvers” that even the blessed of the Father are by no means blessed overmuch; for, according to the latest information, even they will have to undergo a sort of purgatorial purification in the world to come. There are degrees in the inventiveness of the nineteenth-

century theologians; but, to our mind, it is the license given to this inventiveness, even when it is most moderate, which is the root of the whole mischief. What is to be taught next? And what next?

Do men really believe that there is a gospel for each century? Or a religion for each fifty years? Will there be in heaven saints saved according to a score sorts of gospel? Will these agree together to sing the same song? And what will the song be? Saved on different footings, and believing different doctrines, will they enjoy eternal concord, or will heaven itself be only a new arena for disputation between varieties of faiths?

We shall, on the supposition of an ever-developing theology, owe a great deal to the wisdom of men. God may provide the marble; but it is man who will carve the statue. It will no longer be true that God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes; but the babes will be lost in hopeless bewilderment, and carnal wisdom will have fine times for glorying. Scientific men will be the true prophets of our Israel, even though they deny Israel's God; and instead of the Holy Spirit guiding the humble in heart, we shall see the enthronement of "the spirit of the age," whatever that may mean. "The world by wisdom knew not God," so says the apostle of the ages past; but the contrary is to be our experience nowadays. New editions of the gospel are to be excogitated by the wisdom of men, and we are to follow in the wake of "thoughtful preachers," whose thoughts are not as God's thoughts. Verily this is the deification of man! Nor do the moderns shrink even from this. To many of our readers it may already be known that it is beginning to be taught that God himself is but the totality of manhood, and that our Lord Jesus only differed from us in being one of the first men to find out that he was God: he was but one item of that race, which, in its solidarity, is divine.

It is thought to be mere bigotry to protest against the mad spirit which is now loose among us. Pan-indifferentism is rising like the tide; who can hinder it? We are all to be as one, even though we agree in next to nothing. It is a breach of brotherly love to denounce error. Hail, holy charity! Black is white; and white is black. The false is true; the true is false; the true and the false are one. Let us join hands, and never again mention those barbarous, old-fashioned doctrines about which we are sure to differ. Let the good and sound men for liberty's sake shield their "advanced brethren"; or, at least, gently blame them in a tone which means approval. After all, there is no difference, except in the point of view from which we look at

things: it is all in the eye, or, as the vulgar say, "it is all my eye"! In order to maintain an open union, let us fight as for dear life against any form of sound words, since it might restrain our liberty to deny the doctrines of the Word of God!

But what if earnest protests accomplish nothing, because of the invincible resolve of the infatuated to abide in fellowship with the inventors of false doctrine? Well, we shall at least have done our duty. We are not responsible for success. If the plague cannot be stayed, we can at least die in the attempt to remove it. Every voice that is lifted up against Anything Arianism is at least a little hindrance to its universal prevalence. It may be that in some one instance a true witness is strengthened by our word, or a waverer is kept from falling; and this is no mean reward. It is true that our testimony may be held up to contempt; and may, indeed, in itself be feeble enough to be open to ridicule; but yet the Lord, by the weak things of the world, has overcome the mighty in former times, and he will do so again. We cannot despair for the church or for the truth, while the Lord lives and reigns; but, assuredly, the conflict to which the faithful are now summoned is not less arduous than that in which the Reformers were engaged. So much of subtlety is mixed up with the whole business, that the sword seems to fall upon a sack of wool, or to miss its mark. However, plain truth will cut its way in the end, and policy will ring its own death-knell.

Not with this man, or that Council, or that Union, are the lovers of the old gospel at war at this present; but with the whole body of unbelief which is now attempting to borrow the Christian name, and effect a settlement within Christian territory. This spirit is in all the churches, more or less; indeed, it seems to be in the air. The prince of the power of the air is loosed in an extraordinary manner for a season, misleading even the godly, and triumphing greatly in those whose willing minds yield full assent to his deceitful teachings. On this account our fears are great for the Baptist churches, which have in former ages been the strongholds of the gospel of the grace of God. Those communities which avowedly confess the truth of God can deal with the spirit of unbelief, at least in a measure; but those bodies of men which hold no settled doctrines, and make no profession of believing anything definite, are like houses with open doors, inviting the unclean spirit to enter, and take up his abode. We have tried to deal with the spirit of error in its abstract form; but we have also recommended, as a practical action on the behalf of the Baptist Denomination (which we believe to be upon the whole sound in the faith), that it should accept an

Evangelical basis. Its churches and Associations in most cases have such a basis; why not the Union which is made up of them? This question is to come before the Baptist Union at its next general meeting. Should the proposal of an Evangelical basis be carried out, we shall greatly rejoice, for it may be a rebuke to the incipient party of error, which has of late talked so exceeding loudly; but if this is not done, other and stronger measures must be taken, which will enable faithful men to bear their testimony without having it marred by their fellowship with evil. The faithful will take steps to enable them to carry out practical work for the Lord, without the depressing suspicion that their zeal may, after all, be only building nests to be in the future occupied by the hatchers of false doctrine. It may be that, in the Baptist Denomination, the purifying process will be long and painful; but we trust that grace will be given to true believers to persevere till it is accomplished, or else to come forth from the baseless Union, and separate themselves for the defense of the truth of God. We fear that the outlook for certain other denominations is not nearly so hopeful. In their case, what is wanted in the gracious remnant is “a larger hope” than they have at present, that even yet the forces of falsehood can be overcome, since the battle is the Lord’s.

NOTES.

(APRIL 1888)

PRAYER should be continually offered by the people of God at this time. The Baptist Union meets in full assembly on April 23, and the great question then before it will be—“Is this Union to have an Evangelical basis or not?” We trust the question will be discussed with good temper, and that the decision will be of the right kind. Surely, as every other body of Christians avows its faith, the Baptist Union should do the same. Whatever its belief is, let it own it.

We trust that no personal considerations will be allowed to divert the Assembly from its great topic. *The censure* need not be taken into account: the object of it would sooner be censured ten thousand times over than have his name and method of protest used as a red herring to be drawn across the scent. If the Council has any more resolutions to introduce of the nature of further censure, let it have ample scope; but we hope no

solitary moment will be spent in an attempt to reverse its previous deliverance. The time will be better spent upon weightier matters.

Should the majority decide that there shall be no Evangelical basis, the conflict will then begin. There is great reluctance to retire from the Union, but there is a strong resolve to continue seeking a reformation by all available means until the attempt shall prove altogether hopeless. We have heard this determination frequently expressed, and cogent arguments used for its support. It certainly does seem rather out of order that the majority should have to retire before the minority; at any rate, it will be wise to see what the respective numbers are.

An appeal has been made to us to use our influence to prevent the discussion; but this is absurd. Our influence could not prevent the discussion; and we would not prevent it if we could. Do these friends really think that we are playing with words, and have no solemn convictions? So far from ceasing to ask for an Evangelical basis at this particular meeting of the Baptist Union, the brethren who desire it will never discontinue their request until they obtain it. We have come to the parting of the ways, and the old school and the new cannot go much further in company; nor ought they to do so. Let them part with as little friction as possible.

To answer the various inventions of opponents is a work too weary for one who has enough to bear and to do without replying to rumors. If some accuse, many approve; and, meanwhile, rising above both the wrath and admiration of man, our heart finds rest in debug the will of God.

No doubt Israel is troubled, and he who exposes the evil is blamed for it; but in truth the troublers of our Israel are those who have introduced strange doctrines among us. If false teaching were put away, peace and prosperity would return. When the mists have rolled away, and brethren, for the while, blinded by a strange infatuation, once more see things as they are, they will no longer be angry because of the purging of the barn-floor, but will praise God for it.

We are issuing a pamphlet entitled "Creed or No Creed? A question for the Baptist Union." This penny pamphlet, by the brother who first wrote on "The Down-Grade," should be read by all who take an interest in this great discussion.

An interesting incident of the "Down-Grade" controversy has occurred at Guildford. The Young Men's Christian Association in that town recently

held a conference upon the “Down-Grade” question; when it was evident that most of those who took part in the discussion were themselves upon the “Down-Grade.” The result was, that lovers of the truth in the town and neighborhood bestirred themselves, a public meeting was called, the ministers and members of the Baptist and other Evangelical churches attended in large numbers, and a strong resolution of sympathy with us was passed, with only two dissentients.

The Y. M. C. A. scarcely expected such an ending of the discussion, but it shows the advantage of letting in light. The one thing that the “Down-Grade” railway dreads is light.

NOTES.

(MAY 1888)

THE Evangelical Alliance has done grand service to the cause of truth by calling together Christians of all denominations to bear united testimonies to the common faith. It was our great privilege, on two memorable occasions, to address vast and enthusiastic audiences upon “the Unchangeable Gospel” and “Experience as the proof of the old faith.” Very hearty were the words of sympathy addressed to us in private, and overwhelming were the tokens of approval thundered out in public. Letters from all classes of the community, and from all sections of the Church of Christ, show the deep interest which is felt in the controversy concerning vital doctrines. On all sides there are hisses of the serpent, but in greater volume the voices of the seed of the woman. It is an hour of travail, but the outcome of it all will be the increase and the manifestation of true believers. As to breach of unity, nothing has ever more largely promoted the union of the true than the break with the false.

What is all this noise about? Is there anything worth contending for? Otherwise contention itself is a serious evil, a sin to be answered for before the great Judge. We again declare that our contention is not for a narrow, sectarian form of teaching, nor for a personal peculiarity of persuasion: we contend only for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. This is assailed. Unbelief seems to be in the air. It is to be found, not alone in the ministry, but in the deaconship, and in the membership of the churches: not unbelief upon the outskirt truths, but upon the central teaching of

revelation. We only asked that the grosser forms of error should not be tolerated within the bounds of the Christian body to which we belonged. We thought the request a reasonable one, and to obtain it we proposed a form of sound words to be the basis of union. This has raised all this smother. In a few years' time, if the truth should again be to the front, it will scarcely be believed that one of the most pronounced bodies of Evangelical Dissenters hesitated to declare its faith. Even now that body does not like distinctly to refuse, or honestly to yield the demand; and so it balances sentences, discusses everything except the main question, and proffers a base imitation of a declaration in lieu of that which is sought from it. Writing before the Annual Meeting, we write hopelessly. It is more than probable that another attempt will be made to put off the evil day of confessing its faith by raising some point of procedure; or else a strenuous endeavor will be made to get the scanty and objectionable historical statement of the Council carried through as a substitute for that which is requested. It matters little: the truth of God will stand, and those who hold it will in patience possess their souls.

Much talk is poured forth about charity and love. Our marvel has been how certain gentlemen, who have been so fluent thereon, could speak without their consciences rebuking them when they remember their ungenerous action, and personal animosity, towards one whom they speak of as an honored friend. The harsh language of more outspoken opponents has more music in it than such idle compliments. But we forbear. What is said of us is nothing; but shall truth be sold to keep up a wider fellowship?

The error in the Baptist denomination is ten times more widely spread than we knew of when we wrote the "Down-Grade" papers, and we are bound not to withdraw a syllable, but to emphasize each word with all our might. We did not at the first aim at the Baptist body, for we thought most hopefully of it, but the controversy has revealed what we little dreamt of. The Lord in mercy bring back the many wanderers!

NOTES.

(JUNE 1888)

It was no small comfort to see the Baptist Union anxious to clear itself, and to make peace. I hoped that in this happy frame of mind it would do

something which would mend matters, and therefore in all haste I retracted my prophecy that it would do nothing at all. But what has it done? The resolution, with its footnote, with the interpretation of its mover, and the re-election of the old council, fairly represent the utmost that would be done when everybody was in his best humor. Is it satisfactory? Does anybody understand it in the same sense as anybody else? Does not the whole virtue of the thing lie in its pleasing both sides a little? And is not this the vice and the condemnation of it?

I am not, however, careful to criticize the action of a body from which I am now finally divided. My course has been made clear by what has been done. I was afraid from the beginning that the reform of the Baptist Union was hopeless, and therefore I resigned. I am far more sure of it now, and should never under any probable circumstances dream of returning. Those who think it right to remain in such a fellowship will do so, but there are a few others who will judge differently, and will act upon their convictions. At any rate, whether any others do so or not, I have felt the power of the text, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," and have quitted both Union and Association once for all. The next step may not be quite so clear; but this is forced upon me, not only by my convictions, but also by the experience of the utter uselessness of attempting to deal with the evil except by personally coming out from it.

The instinct of the gracious life is to seek congenial communion, and hence the necessity of some form of fellowship for ourselves and our churches will suggest itself to those who sorrowfully come forth from the old camp. To institute such a thing formally, and ask persons to join it, would be folly: it must grow up of itself—by the demand of those who desire it, and then it will be true and lasting. I do not, therefore, move in this direction till I hear from other brethren of like mind that they desire to do so. It will not harm us to abide alone for a little while, till we see where we are; and then, whether we are few or many, we can unite to help our poorer brethren, and to conserve the faith. Our desire is not to oppose others, but that we may strengthen each other's hands in the Lord. Utterly isolated church life would have its evils, and in true union there will be not only strength but joy. This will come in due time if it be the Lord's will.

NOTES.

(JULY 1888)

A MAGAZINE is in some danger of death when the editor is so completely prostrate that his brain will not think, and his right hand cannot hold a pen. But it has so happened that our peculiarly heavy affliction came upon us this time in a sort of interval between one monthly number and the next, and we are, through restoring mercy, again able to set about our appointed task. There is always some circumstance of grace about the heaviest trial. The thorn-bush bears its rose. The Lord lets us see a bright light in the clouds even when they gather in grimmest fashion.

We have not done anything, nor scarcely even devised anything, as to the great conflict now raging between truth and error, for the one reason that we have been quite laid aside. On returning to the subject, we find many generous letters of sympathy, and not a few of painful information. A venerable Baptist brother says: "Dry rot is more extended than any of us thought. People and priest are infected by the disease. Yet the Ruler over all can overrule it for good. Many who are sound are timid, many confused as to what to do, and many too indolent to do anything; but the battle is the Lord's." This witness is true; but surely there are some left who have eyes to see the great evil at once, and courageous consistency enough to shake themselves free of it. If they *need* reminding of their duty, it is to be feared that they are not the men who are worth reminding. Time was when for a hundredth part of the foul evils now tolerated in religious Unions, servants of God would have lifted up the cry, "To your tents, O Israel!" Shall we be again called a pessimist if we say that the days when truth was everything are "with the years beyond the flood"?

Complaints as to sermons ridiculing answers to prayer, deriding early piety, speaking coarsely of the precious blood of Jesus, and denying the universal need of conversion, are common enough. We cannot spare space for instances, which would only give pain to faithful hearts. These are very sorrowful matters; for they betoken not so much doctrinal error as utter ungodliness. In some cases the man is more wrong in the heart than in the head, if we can judge by the general tone of his conversation. Certain preachers seem to have taken out a license to speak contemptuously of holy things, and they do this under cover of decrying the worn-out ideas of

old-fashioned orthodoxy. Of course, they can do so with impunity when once their churches have become sufficiently worldly and heterodox. Errors in creed are insignificant matters compared with the absence of spiritual life and the presence of irreligious scorn. One of our correspondents, by no means a bigot, says that, after hearing a sermon by a person of this school, he almost instinctively stood up to see what sort of people they were who would accept such talk as a part of public worship. One does a little wonder what kind of Christians they must be.

In one of our churches the doctrines of Purgatory and Future Restitution have, since the Baptist Union meeting, been so distinctly preached that many of the members have taken alarm, and are looking about them to know what is to be done. It is said that the famous compromise condemned these notions, but it appears that the holders of them do not think so, for they remain where they were, and are even more bold than before to teach their delusions. How godly brethren can remain in fellowship with them is a question which rises continually to our lip. We would gladly contribute to union and harmony, but we have a conscience. There must be some few brethren left who possess the same sort of troublesome monitor; and, if so, they must have bad times when they come to think that their fellowship keeps the enemies of the gospel in countenance, and that the blood of innumerable souls will lie at their door.

A working-man, who is an intelligent deacon and preacher, giving us his name, and the name of the minister referred to, speaks of the old-fashioned orthodox teaching being held up to contempt from the pulpit. "The substitutionary sacrifice and the Trinity were quickly disposed of, and the penknife was set to work. Whole chapters were cut out of the Bible; we were told that certain books of it ought never to have been written. Verbal inspiration was utter rubbish, and ought never to be tolerated." As a consequence, the number of empty pews is appalling, and the people are told to console themselves with the fact that mere numbers are no test of prosperity. The prospect of the chapel being closed is by no means remote.

It is with the utmost pain that we mention such instances, but there are still some who are bold enough to deny that there are any departures from the faith, or so very few that they are not worth mentioning. Of course, in that case, all that we have said is either willful falsehood, or else the dark dream of a morbid mind. We assert that we are neither morbid nor untrue, but that around us there are influences at work which are directly antagonistic

to Christianity, and that anyone may see them who chooses to do so. The babyish game of shutting your eyes, and then crying, "I cannot see you," has been played at long enough: it is time that the most prejudiced should acknowledge that which everybody sees except themselves.

A week or two ago, a minister had been to hear a Congregational divine, on a great occasion; and, as he came out of the chapel, he said to a brother minister, "There is truth after all in what Spurgeon says: ministers do make infidels, and this sermon will make a great many; and yet there are ministers here who will be delighted with the sermon." The subject had been the infallibility of the Scriptures, especially the historical portions of them. The whole foundation of inspired teaching was abandoned. Time and thought will, we trust, arouse godly men to a sense of their wrong-doing in remaining in fellowship with those who not only deny the old-fashioned gospel, but question the fundamentals of religion. It cannot always be so that the Bible shall be degraded from its preeminence as the revelation of God, and those who are guilty of the crime shall yet be had in esteem as Christian teachers. It is wonderful how things have come to be as they are; but that they should remain so, is incredible, seeing that God lives to vindicate his own Word.

NOTES.

(AUGUST 1888)

WE take special note of *Memorials of Joseph Tritton*. Our departed friend was a man of a thousand—a choice and chastened spirit. By nature he was of pure taste and elevated spirit; but grace came in and refined everything, and wrought in him the beauty of holiness. All his sympathies were with the most pronounced evangelical teaching, and with the most practical gospel service. Nothing of the "Down-Grade" tendency could be endured by him: with a firmness singularly strengthened by gentleness, he put aside the false, and embraced the true. Mr. Tritton was the author of many exquisite hymns—hymns which are for persons of thoughtful mind and chaste taste. It would have been a great pity for these to have remained like scattered pearls; and it was a gracious impulse which led Mrs. Tritton to collect a number of them, and preserve them as a memorial of her beloved husband. That the volume should be sold for the benefit of the Baptist

Missionary Society is a comely thing—such a thing as would comport with his own wish could he return among us. For twenty years he was the treasurer of the Baptist Mission; and at its jubilee, in 1842, he made his first public speech.

In these memorials we have both verse and prose. As the price is only 2s., and the money goes to the Mission, many of our readers will write to 19, Furnival Street, Holborn, for the book. They should enclose an extra threepence if they wish it sent by post.

We think our friends should all see the following letter by Mr. Henry Varley. We find it in *Word and Work* for July 20. It is a fine, outspoken, brotherly testimony; and, as we have had no conversation with our friend upon the subject dealt with, it is an altogether independent testimony from one who has traversed our country from end to end, and knows what he is writing about. We omit a paragraph about a newspaper, but give the rest *verbatim*:—

“Mr. Varley On The ‘Down-Grade.’

“*To the Editor of ‘Word and Work.’*

“Sir,—The discussion which has taken place during my absence from England is, in my judgment, of the very first importance; and I regret exceedingly that I was not here to express my hearty sympathy with Mr. Spurgeon, and those who have taken part in the defense of the gospel of Christ.

“There is great danger lest the important issues which have been raised by the ‘Down-Grade’ controversy should, in the interests of peace and union, be diminished and made light of. The mental activities of the present time are not favorable to holding firmly the Word of God. Revelation, which is unchanging, is not fast enough for an age of which it may be said, ‘Change is its fashion.’ All the more necessary, therefore, does it become to ‘hold fast the form of sound words,’ and contend earnestly, not for what some have called a mechanical system of interpretation, but ‘for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.’

“We ought not to forget, face to face as we are with thousands of volumes filled with corrupt and false thought on almost every subject, that the prolific chamber for the conception and birth of

false thought is the human mind, whenever it refuses the limit, discipline, and guidance of the fundamental principles of the Word of God. It is the faith of Christ which is persistently attacked, and which we intend persistently to defend.

“Take a recent case. In a northern town, a Congregational minister, conversing with one of his brethren, said, in reference to his approaching Sunday-school anniversary, ‘I select the hymns; I do not leave it to my superintendent or teachers.’ ‘Why not?’ was the inquiry. ‘Well,’ was this false teacher’s reply, ‘very likely they would select hymns that I object to have sung in my church.’ ‘Why, what hymns do you refer to?’ inquired the brother minister. ‘Well,’ was the Congregational minister’s reply, ‘such hymns as “Rock of Ages, cleft for me,” or “Jesus, Lover of my soul,” or “There is a fountain filled with blood”; I am not going to have such hymns sung in my church.’

“Now, Sir, I fear the Congregational Union is powerless to deal with this deceiver. There cannot be room to doubt that, if this man had told the church of which he is the pastor that he would not have these hymns sung, he would never have been elected as the minister. The unfailing Word describes this dishonest deceiver to the life: ‘But there were false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall PRIVILY bring in damnable heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction’ (2 Peter 2:1).

“This deceiver brought in *privily* his destructive heresies; that is, he kept back from the church his views until he had secured his position as the minister. The dishonesty of such conduct is patent. I can understand ministers drifting into the deceptions which deny the atonement after they have been elected, but in such cases honesty of conduct would at once say, ‘I must leave this church; my views are changed, but that change does not discharge my responsibility in regard to the doctrines and teachings which are held by the church in which I minister.’

“Why do not these men take neutral ground, and air their modern notions on their own platforms? Is it anything less than dishonesty of the worst possible type for a man to appear to subscribe to the doctrine of the gospel of Christ by accepting a platform or pulpit

confessedly committed to and identified with that gospel, all the time intending, when the ministerial position is secured, to undermine and subvert that gospel? It may well be said of these men, 'They bring in sects of perdition' (R.V.). For of those who reject the sacrifice of Christ in order to the putting away of sin it is written, 'There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries' (Hebrews 10:27).

"The spread and working of this accursed leaven is defiling and corrupting in many quarters. Let us make no mistake, nor suffer the cry of 'Peace, peace,' to arrest the watchman's alarm. I am sure, Sir, to hear some of the things which have been written and said, you would suppose that Mr. Spurgeon ought to have framed definite charges against certain men in the Baptist Union, and have had them tried for heresy.

"I know of no court for such a trial; and if it existed, the men who should be charged with the heresy would be represented as martyrs, and as being persecuted for truth and liberty. Sympathy, money, and professions of friendship would be readily tendered; whilst Mr. Spurgeon, or any other man who should so act, would be held up before his fellow-men as a bigoted persecutor. The press, especially a portion of the religious press, would heap ridicule and opprobrium upon the entire question at issue.

"Separation, in my judgment, in Mr. Spurgeon's case, was wise and right. In no other way could he have made so effectual a protest against these 'destructive heresies.' The providence of God has made his servant (Mr. Spurgeon) much more than a prominent Baptist. He belongs to the greater church, viz., the church of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. His coming out from the Baptist Union has done very important service. Better that ten denominational unions should perish than that the great truth of Christ's sacrifice for sin should be ignored, misrepresented, or fail of constant prominence.

"Mr. Spurgeon's protest has been most timely. It is unwise to limit Mr. Spurgeon's action and attitude as though it necessarily reflected painfully or exclusively upon his own brethren in the Baptist denomination. This has arisen mainly by reason of Mr.

Spurgeon's overshadowing individuality. In the same way I can understand what have been felt as our strong brother's hard words. I am as certain as I live that Mr. Spurgeon never intended any reflection upon such men as the gentle-spirited Dr. Culross; but I apprehend that none of the brethren would delegate that gentle spirit to the battlefield to do hard and doughty service against the troublers of Israel. Yes, Sir, it is easy to criticize the soldier at war on the battlefield, but I am not by any means sure that criticism begotten in the calmness and quiet of converse or the study after the fight is over is competent to pronounce judgment upon the warrior. For my part, I thank God for the timely and important protest given by Mr. Spurgeon; and I cannot see what force there is in the oft-repeated remark that his act was a reflection upon the soundness of the whole of his brethren. I have been away during the heat of the war. I am not conscious in this writing of any motive actuating me save a deep interest in and regard for the great and vital truths of revelation, and an earnest desire to express my deep sympathy with Mr. Spurgeon in his defense of truths which are dearer than life itself.

“This is no time for quiet in the sense of going over to the majority. Error is rampant, and the time of crisis is at hand; should any suppose that Mr. Spurgeon has been worsted in this conflict, let them think this again, that it is easy to be deceived by appearances. It is still through death to life, and through seeming defeat to divine victory.

“HENRY VARLEY.”

The remarkable utterance of Dr. Dods, at the Presbyterian assembly, must surely arouse the faithful to a sense of the present danger. This is the sort of divine that the Baptist Society authorities invite to preach a special sermon. The more questionable a man's theology becomes, the more sure is he to be asked to take part in the public displays of the denomination. We can hardly think that the bulk of the people would have it so, but the rulers carry out their own devices.

The following resolution was prepared by a committee of the Kentucky Baptist Ministers' Meeting, and unanimously adopted by the General

Association of the Baptists of the State of Kentucky, a body comprising over 137,000 members, 960 ministers, and 1,300 churches:—

“Resolved, that the ministers and other messengers of the General Association of the Baptists of the State of Kentucky, assembled in annual meeting at Eminence, in the said State, this 20th day of June, 1888, send Christian greeting to their esteemed brother, Pastor C. H. Spurgeon, assuring him of their thorough appreciation and approval of the faithful stand he has made in defense of important Scriptural truth in the recent ‘Down-Grade’ controversy; of their deep sympathy with him in his personal affliction, and in the attacks which his fidelity has invited; and of their earnest prayers that the God of all grace may long spare him to his great work as an earnest, eloquent, and faithful minister of Christ’s gospel, and a valiant defender of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

On the day previous, June 19, the Nova Scotia Western Baptist Association passed unanimously a resolution to the same effect as the above. For these brotherly actions we are deeply grateful. To stand alone for the truth is a lesson we are learning; but to find others with us is a joy we delight in.

It seems to be an amusement to certain papers to invent courses of action, and impute them to us. This will do no harm if nobody believes them. When we make a move, it will not be done in the dark, and our friends shall not first learn it at the lips of opponents.

CURRENT RELIGIOUS PERILS.

(SEPTEMBER 1888)

THE following letter, which we find in a new volume of Joseph Cook's Lectures, so nearly represents our views that we cannot withhold it from our readers at this solemn crisis. There is a manifest bracing up and returning to the old faith among many brethren; but their complicity with those who hold some one or other form of the Restoration delusion is shocking to contemplate. They may not be in error themselves, but they are in brotherly confederacy with those who are so.

“From the Rev. E. K. Alden, D.D., Home Secretary of the American Board of Foreign Missions, Boston.

“REV. JOSEPH COOK.

“Dear Sir,—In response to your inquiry I would reply that, in my opinion, one of the religious perils of the hour is the failure of many good men to discern the peril. There is sometimes a drift toward error which is gradual and almost imperceptible, and yet may be so steady and strong that the trend of a man's influence is toward error, although he is continuously advocating the truth. There are times when what a man omits to say is more effective in the wrong direction than are his words in the right direction. If a person is known to hold a serious error, even though he may seldom or never directly advocate it, that fact that he is known to hold the error will possibly neutralize all his fervid utterances of the truth. This is particularly the case when the error is a popular current error, which needs to be steadily resisted by all good men.

“Indeed, there are times when the exclusive advocacy of certain important truths has the effect of error. And the reason is, that the truths are advocated in the interests of error. For example, there was a time, as some of us well remember, when the constant reiteration of the importance of saving the National Union was the most deadly weapon in the interests of secession. Nothing is more common, as we are daily reminded, than loud declamation in behalf of liberty in the interests of the worst forms of thralldom.

“So at the present time some of the most precious gospel truths are preached in the interest of some of the most pernicious errors. In other words, the unseasonable or disproportionate presentation of certain truths makes for error. Not that the error should always or often be definitely and directly opposed in a controversial manner, though this is sometimes inevitable; but that the appropriate timely truth best fitted to counteract, here and now, that particular error, should be vigorously presented.

“To be more specific, the popular trend just now in certain localities, not a thousand miles from Boston, is toward the unscriptural and dangerous dogma that all men will be finally saved.

“This error underlies a considerable part of the teaching and preaching of more than one religious denomination, and of more than one religious teacher whose instructions, in the main, are evangelical. But these very instructions, which emphasize the universality of the atonement, the universality of the offers of mercy, the Fatherhood of God, and the yearning of that Father’s heart toward all his children, ‘not willing that any should perish’—these instructions alone, silent as to the connected warning of the imminent peril of presuming on this superabounding divine grace, ignoring the divine justice and the certainty of the final doom of the wicked, become the persistent preaching of error in its most subtle and seductive form. Unless a person clearly discerns and strongly believes in the ultimate separation of the righteous and the wicked, in the ‘everlasting death’ as certainly as the ‘everlasting life,’ and is known so to believe, emphasizing this serious truth, as did our Lord and his apostles, in association with the precious truths centering in the riches of divine grace, presenting them both with the same tenderness, he will almost inevitably be a continuous teacher of dangerous error.

“Herein lies the peril of the unscriptural teaching, even in a hypothetical form, of the possibility, for some, of gracious opportunity for repentance beyond death. The Word of God is so explicit in so many varied forms in declaring that ‘the righteous’ and ‘the wicked’ to whom it alludes are ‘the righteous’ and ‘the wicked’ whose characters are formed in the present life, and who will thus stand with unchanged characters in the ‘resurrection of the

just and of the unjust,' that the omission to declare this momentous truth and to use it as did our Lord himself to give urgency to his word, is a fatal omission, both in the instructions of a theological seminary and of a Christian pulpit, and will, almost without fail, involve the teaching of error under the guise, and even in the utterance, of precious truth. Here certainly is one of our 'current religious perils.'

"Yours respectfully,

"E. K. ALDEN.

"Boston, March 21, 1887."

NOTES.

(SEPT. 1888)

To many inquiring friends the editor would gratefully say that he is much better, though specially weak. Changing weather, with so much wet and cold, prevent a quick return to usual health. After a severe illness strength is slow in returning. Yet the work of the Lord has gone on with not less of blessing than in years past.

Hosts of American friends have been at the Tabernacle, and have greeted the preacher with loving sympathy. With these have come men of eminence, and plain lovers of the gospel belonging to all the denominations, bringing warm and tender words of sympathy and cheer. God is very gracious, and sends consolation by the hands of those whose very manner adds sweetness to their words. It is hard to make Christian people understand that there is a Union of professed Christians, which receives into its fellowship persons of any creed, or no creed, so long as they have been baptized. It is not easy to believe that men professing to hold the truth of God will retain in their communion men whose views are far removed from what is understood to be the evangelical faith. We are not anxious that Christians of other lands should be assured of a fact which is so greatly to be deplored; but certainly it is to the most of them a great surprise.

Few who have spoken with us have failed to see that there is a tremendous current, both broad and deep, which is running counter to the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and to those fundamental truths which until lately have been considered vital to the Christian religion. The question now raised strikes at the root of all true religion. It is not so much which doctrine is Scriptural, but is there any inspired Scripture from which doctrine can be drawn with certainty? After dreaming and doting upon a future other than Scripture reveals, men now dream about Scripture itself. However, all this will have its day, and before long true hearts will turn from it with loathing. We believe that God and his great future are on the side of the old faith, and we are content to wait, and see what he will do.

The Pastor and Church at the Tabernacle are now free from all hampering connections with Unions and Associations, but by no means without communion of the warmest kind with the Lord's faithful people. We have no doubt that ways will be found in which all the benefits of fellowship will be enjoyed with those churches with which we can honestly and heartily unite. Of any movement our friends shall be informed. We hope they will believe nothing which the newspapers may insert, since in the absence of information they are apt to make guesses, and state them as facts. Our attitude is that of waiting for divine direction. Unbelief is in a hurry, faith can bide its time.

Mr. Henry Varley is doing grand service by his papers upon inspiration in *Word and Work*, in answer to Mr. Horton's book. No doubt there will, as the struggle is intensified, be raised up other brave advocates for the eternal Word; but meanwhile our brother is doing the work in a thoroughly efficient manner. Although the policy of silence is again adopted by the Loose School in the matter of the "Down-Grade," it is happily the case that it is impossible to apply the pitch-plaster to all mouths; there are yet men and papers which cannot be burked or bought. All our readers should see what Mr. Varley has written, and Baptists especially, since the author whom he criticizes is chosen by the Baptist Union to take a leading part at its autumnal session.

The prayers of the Lord's people at the Tabernacle have been graciously heard in the restoration to us of our beloved brother and deacon, William Olney, after long suffering, borne with a cheerful patience which has been a lesson to us all. Long may he now be spared to the Lord's work! His son, Mr. William Olney, Jr., continues his laborious service at Haddon Hall, and

week by week we see persons, some from the poorest and most degraded districts, brought to Jesus. Week by week our numbers receive additions. The College is not in session, for the men are having their vacation; the orphans are nearly all away; the seat-holders are most of them at the seaside; yet through the influx of strangers the crowds are even greater than usual, and many: feel the power of the Word, though as they mostly return to the country, we shall not have the home church thus increased. The Lord is with us, and we magnify his name.

NOTES.

(OCT. 1888)

Every day affords more and more evidence that while many are true to their Lord, unbelief has sadly eaten into Congregational and Baptist churches. It is not the ministers only who have espoused the modern inventions; but in some instances where the pastor remains true to evangelical doctrine, the deacons and leading members have gone aside to novel theories. The inspiration of Holy Scripture in the sense of its being the infallible Word of God, is not held sincerely by all those who wish to appear evangelical. This is the most serious matter of all, since it removes the very foundations of faith. We do not bring hasty accusations, but know what we affirm; and those of whom we make the affirmation know that we speak the truth. The varied views of the future which now obtain are naturally linked in with other errors, or logically involve them. The door is open, and droves of falsehoods enter by it. Numbers of good brethren in different ways remain in fellowship with those who are undermining the gospel; and they talk of their conduct as though it were a loving course which the Lord will approve of in the day of his appearing. We cannot understand them. The bounden duty of a true believer towards men who profess to be Christians, and yet deny the Word of the Lord, and reject the fundamentals of the gospel, is to come out from among them. If it be said that efforts should be made to produce reform, we agree with the remark; but when you know that they will be useless, what is the use? Where the basis of association allows error, and almost invites it, and there is an evident determination not to alter that basis, nothing remains to be done inside, which can be of any radical service. The operation of an evangelical party within can only repress, and, perhaps, conceal, the evil for a time; but

meanwhile, sin is committed by the compromise itself, and no permanently good result can follow. To stay in a community which fellowships all beliefs in the hope of setting matters right, is as though Abraham had stayed at Ur, or at Haran, in the hope of converting the household out of which he was called.

Complicity with error will take from the best of men the power to enter any successful protest against it. If any body of believers had errorists among them, but were resolute to deal with them in the name of the Lord, all might come right; but confederacies founded upon the principle that all may enter, whatever views they hold, are based upon disloyalty to the truth of God. If truth is optional, error is justifiable. If some supposed “life” is to be all, and “truth” is to be thrust out of doors, then there is room for all except the believer in the doctrines which have been revealed by the Eternal Spirit.

Our present sorrowful protest is not a matter of this man or that, this error or that; but of principle. There either is something essential to a true faith—some truth which is to be believed; or else everything is left to each man’s taste. We believe in the first of these opinions, and hence we cannot dream of religious association with those who might on the second theory be acceptable. Those who are of our mind should, at all cost, act upon it. The Lord give them decision, and wean them from all policy and trimming!

Our one sole aim is the preservation and spread of the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and we mourn that godly men should be parties to a system which is destructive of good, and only promotive of error. It is clear that, as a general rule, error by itself has not the power to maintain communities in a flourishing condition among Nonconformists. As a general fact, churches avowedly Unitarian, or anti-evangelical, gradually dwindle. The Old General Baptists, once rid of the evangelicals, made a rapid descent to their present moribund condition, while the evangelicals multiplied abundantly. The plan of the enemy now is to lay the egg of error in the nest of our churches. It is hoped that among a people so tolerant of false doctrine as many Baptists and Congregationalists now are, this new doctrine will work secretly, and gain too strong a hold to be removed. The plan is a very crafty one, and seems likely to succeed. It is hard to get leaven out of dough, and easy to put it in. This leaven is already working. Our daring to unveil this deep design is inconvenient, and of course it brings upon our devoted head all manner of abuse. But that matters nothing so long as the

plague is stayed. Oh, that those who are spiritually alive in the churches may look to this thing, and may the Lord himself baffle the adversary!

We are represented as wishing to force upon the churches a narrow creed. Nothing was further from our mind. We do not consider that the demand for agreement to vital truths common to all Christians can be looked upon as a piece of sectarian bigotry. Here is a man, who is himself a Calvinist, who does not ask that a Union should draw up a Calvinistic creed, but only begs for one which will let the whole world know that brethren are associated as Christians, and that those who do not agree to the first principles of our faith will be intruders. Is this narrowness? If, after a basis is laid down, errorists do intrude, the case will be very different from what it is at present, and less of responsibility will lie upon the members of the community. It is mere cant to cry, "We are evangelical; we are all evangelical," and yet decline to say what evangelical means. If men are really evangelical, they delight to spread as glad tidings the truths from which they take the name.

Waiting still for guidance, we begin to see our way in a measure, but implore prayer that every step may be of the Lord.

(Nov. 1888)

The following resolution of sympathy with us in our action in the "Down-Grade" controversy came to hand just too late for last month's magazine. We feel sure that our readers will be glad to see it, even now. It was unanimously passed at the annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces of Canada—*i.e.*, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island:—

"*Whereas* the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon has for more than thirty years been known to the Christian world as a most devoted man of God, a noble defender of the faith, and a man greatly honored of God, in the wonderful success which has constantly attended his labors in the gospel, and in the many religious and philanthropic works he has originated, and in which he is still most earnestly engaged; and *whereas* he has felt it to be his duty of late to sever his connection with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and also with the London Baptist Association, on account of the laxity of doctrine of some of the brethren, and the unwillingness on the part of the said societies to adopt such articles of faith as would commit the membership to orthodoxy, and have a tendency to check the 'Down-

Grade' drift in the churches; therefore *resolved* that this Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, now in annual session, this twenty-fifth day of August, 1888, representing some forty-four thousand members of Baptist churches, take this opportunity to place on record the high esteem in which our honored brother, Pastor Spurgeon, is held by us; and we hereby express our hearty sympathy with him in his bold and unflinching contention for the truths of the gospel; and it is our earnest prayer to Almighty God that his faith may remain unshaken, and that he may long be spared to wield valiantly the sword of the Spirit, and that in the future, as in the past, God may continue to make the weapons of his warfare mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan, and the building up of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior in the world."

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

DECEMBER, 1888.

ATTEMPTS AT THE IMPOSSIBLE

By C. H. Spurgeon

FRIENDS will have noticed with interest the repeated debates in *the London Baptist Association*, as to whether there should be a “credal basis,” and what that basis should be, if it were decided to have one. There seems to be a current opinion that I have been at the bottom of all this controversy, and if I have not appeared in it, I have, at least, pulled the wires. But this is not true. I have taken a deep interest in the struggles of the orthodox brethren; but I have never advised those struggles, nor entertained the slightest hope of their success. My course has been of another kind. As soon as I saw, or thought I saw, that error had become firmly established, I did not deliberate, but quitted the body at once. Since then my one counsel has been, “Come ye out from among them.” If I have rejoiced in the loyalty to Christ’s truth which has been shown in other courses of action, yet I have felt that no protest could be equal to that of distinct separation from known evil.

I never offered to the Union, or to the Association, the arrogant bribe of personal return if a creed should be adopted; but, on the contrary, I told the deputation from the Union that I should not return until I had seen how matters went, and I declined to mix up my own personal action with the consideration of a question of vital importance to the community. I never sought from the Association the consideration of “a credal basis”; but on the contrary, when offered that my resignation might stand over till such a consideration had taken place, I assured the brethren that what I had done was final, and did not depend upon their action in the matter of a creed. The attempt, therefore, to obtain a basis of union in the Association, whatever may be thought of it, should be viewed as a matter altogether apart from me, for so indeed it has been.

I may, however, venture to express the opinion, that the evangelical brethren in the Association have acted with much kindness, and have

shown a strong desire to abide in union with others, if such union could be compassed without the sacrifice of truth. They as good as said—We think there are some few great truths which are essential to the reception of the Christian religion, and we do not think we should be right to associate with those who repudiate those truths. Will you not agree that these truths should be stated, and that it should be known that persons who fail to accept these vital truths cannot join the Association? The points mentioned were certainly elementary enough, and we did not wonder that one of the brethren exclaimed, “May God help those who do *not* believe these things! Where must they be?” Indeed, little objection was taken to the statements which were tabulated, but the objection was to a belief in these being made indispensable to membership. It was as though it had been said, “Yes, we believe in the Godhead of the Lord Jesus; but we would not keep a man out of our fellowship because he thought our Lord to be a mere man. We believe in the atonement; but if another man rejects it, he must not, therefore, be excluded from our number.” Here was the point at issue: one party would gladly fellowship every person who had been baptized, and the other party desired that at the least the elements of the faith should be believed, and the first principles of the gospel should be professed by those who were admitted into the fellowship of the Association. Since neither party could yield the point in dispute, what remained for them but to separate with as little friction as possible?

To this hour, I must confess that I do not understand the action of either side in this dispute, if viewed in the white light of logic. Why should they wish to be together? Those who wish for the illimitable fellowship of men of every shade of belief or doubt would be all the freer for the absence of those stubborn evangelicals who have cost them so many battles. The brethren, on the other hand, who have a doctrinal faith, and prize it, must have learned by this time that whatever terms may be patched up, there is no spiritual oneness between themselves and the new religionists. They must also have felt that the very endeavor to make a compact which will tacitly be understood in two senses, is far from being an ennobling and purifying exercise to either party.

The brethren in the middle are the source of this clinging together of discordant elements. These who are for peace at any price, who persuade themselves that there is very little wrong, who care chiefly to maintain existing institutions, these are the good people who induce the weary combatants to repeat the futile attempt at a coalition, which, in the nature

of things, must break down. If both sides could be unfaithful to conscience, or if the glorious gospel could be thrust altogether out of the question, there might be a league of amity established; but as neither of these things can be, there would seem to be no reason for persevering in the-attempt to maintain a confederacy for which there is no justification in fact, and from which there can be no worthy result, seeing it does not embody a living truth. A desire for unity is commendable. Blessed are they who can promote it and preserve it! But there are other matters to be considered as well as unity, and sometimes these may even demand the first place. When union becomes a moral impossibility, it may almost drop out of calculation in arranging plans and methods of working. If it is clear as the sun at noonday that no real union can exist, it is idle to strive after the impossible, and it is wise to go about other and more practicable business.

There are now two parties in the religious world, and a great mixed multitude who from various causes decline to be ranked with either of them. In this army of intermediates are many who have no right to be there; but we spare them. The day will, however, come when they will have to reckon with their own consciences. When the light is taken out of its place, they may have to mourn that they were not willing to trim the lamp, nor even to notice that the flame grew dim.

The party everywhere apparent has a faith fashioned for the present century—perhaps we ought rather to say, for the present month. The sixteenth century gospel it derides, and that, indeed, of every period except the present most enlightened era. It will have no creed because it can have none: it is continually on the move; it is not what it was yesterday, and it will not be tomorrow what it is today. Its shout is for “liberty,” its delight is invention, its element is change. On the other hand, there still survive, amid the blaze of nineteenth century light, a few whom these superior persons call “fossils”: that is to say, there are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who consider that the true gospel is no new gospel, but is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. These do not believe in “advanced views,” but judge that the view of truth which saved a soul in the second century will save a soul now, and that a form of teaching which was unknown till the last few years is of very dubious value, and is, in all probability, “another gospel, which is not another.”

It is extremely difficult for these two parties to abide in union. The old fable of the collier who went home to dwell with the fuller is nothing to it.

The fuller would by degrees know the habits of his coaly companion, and might thus save the white linen from his touch; but in this case there are no fixed quantities on the collier's side, and nothing like permanency even in the black of his coal. How can his friend deal with him, since he changes with the moon? If, after long balancing of words, the two parties could construct a basis of agreement, it would, in the nature of things, last only for a season, since the position of the advancing party would put the whole settlement out of order in a few weeks. One could hardly invent a sliding-scale in theology, as Sir Robert Peel did in the corn duties. The adjustment of difficulties would be a task for ever beginning, and never coming to an end. If we agree, after a sort, today, a new settlement will be needed tomorrow. If I am to stay where I am, and you are to go traveling on, it is certain that we cannot long lodge in the same room. Why should we attempt it?

Nor is it merely doctrinal belief—there is an essential difference in spirit between the old believer and the man of new and advancing views. This is painfully perceived by the Christian man before very long. Even if he be fortunate enough to escape the sneers of the cultured, and the jests of the philosophical, he will find his deepest convictions questioned, and his brightest beliefs misrepresented by those who dub themselves “thoughtful men.” When a text from the Word has been peculiarly precious to his heart, he will hear its authenticity impugned, the translation disputed, or its gospel reference denied. He will not travel far on the dark continent of modern thought before he will find the efficacy of prayer debated, the operation of divine Providence questioned, and the special love of God denied. He will find himself to be a stranger in a strange land when he begins to speak of his experience, and of the ways of God to men. In all probability, if he be faithful to his old faith, he will be an alien to his mother's children, and find that his soul is among lions. To what end, therefore, are these strainings after a hollow unity, when the spirit of fellowship is altogether gone?

The world is large enough, why not let us go our separate ways? Loud is the cry of our opponents for liberty; let them have it by all means. But let us have our liberty also. We are not bound to belong to this society, or to that. There is a right of association which we do not forego, and this involves a right of disassociation, which we retain with equal tenacity. Those who are so exceedingly liberal, large-hearted, and broad might be so good as to allow us to forego the charms of their society without coming under the full violence of their wrath.

At any rate, cost what it may, to separate ourselves from those who separate themselves from the truth of God is not alone our liberty, but our duty. I have raised my protest in the only complete way by coming forth, and I shall be content to abide alone until the day when the Lord shall judge the secrets of all hearts; but it will not seem to me a strange thing if others are found faithful, and if others judge that for them also there is no path but that which is painfully apart from the beaten track.

STAND FAST.

FAILURE at a crucial moment may mar the entire outcome of a life. A man who has enjoyed special light is made bold to follow in the way of the Lord, and is anointed to guide others therein. He rises into a place of love and esteem among the godly, and this promotes his advancement among men. What then? The temptation comes to be careful of the position he has gained, and to do nothing to endanger it. The man, so lately a faithful man of God, compromises with worldlings, and to quiet his own conscience invents a theory by which such compromises are justified, and even commended. He receives the praises of “the judicious”; he has, in truth, gone over to the enemy. The whole force of his former life now tells upon the wrong side. If the Lord loves him well enough, he will be scourged back to his place; but if not, he will grow more and more perverse, till he becomes a ring-leader among the opposers of the gospel. To avoid such an end it becomes us ever to stand fast.

C.H.S.

NOTES.

(JAN. 1889)

THE CHRISTIAN WORLD, in its review of the nondescript Conference on “Evangelical” Preaching, which was held in the month of November, very accurately says of it: “It started from nothing, and it ends nowhere.” This may serve as a very fair description of much of the less pronounced theology of the period. We view matters from a point of view which is precisely the opposite of *The Christian World*; but we come to the same

conclusion as it has done, namely, that what is sought to be palmed off upon the public by many as Evangelicalism, “on its intellectual side, lies neither here nor there, but is consistent with the most widespread differences of belief.” You may believe anything, everything, or nothing, and yet be enrolled in the “Evangelical” army—*so they say*. Will there arise no honest, out-spoken evangelicals among Dissenters to expose and repudiate this latitudinarianism? Are all the watchmen asleep? Are all the churches indifferent? We quote, however, from our antagonistic contemporary that we may reproduce its testimony to our correctness of judgment. It cannot be supposed to be a witness biased in our favor, but it says, “It is now established by abundant signs that Mr. Spurgeon is well within the mark in asserting that among Nonconformist preachers there is a very marked defection from the doctrinal standard maintained by their fathers, and still upheld by him; and every day that defection is becoming more visible.” We do not now need this testimony, for ministers who at first denied our impeachment have passed far beyond that stage, and admitting the truth of what we objected to, are glorying in the defection as a happy advance, a laudable piece of progress, a matter not needing defense, but deserving to be carried still further. Is it not so? If it be so, upon whose heads will rest the guilt of this evil hour? The “Evangelical” leaders of the day, who are dallying with the grossest heresies must answer for it in the day of the Lord’s appearing.

As John Bunyan has, by a thousand-horse power engine, been dragged into the Down-Grade controversy, as though he was, or would have been, opposed to our protest, we thought we would look into his works, to see if he had ever been opposed to a creed; and, as our readers will have guessed, we soon found that he had one of his own, exceedingly full and clear. It seems like a joke, that the most reckless of our opponents should attempt to put Honest John on the wrong side; and, in no spirit of jest, but in downright earnest, we suggest to any who are inclined to repeat the clumsy experiment, that they should first study Bunyan’s own Confession of Faith. As we are half afraid that they will decline the task, we make them a present of his belief upon the Doctrine of Election. If *they* should not take delight in reading it, there may be others who will. At any rate, the Scriptural teaching which he sets forth in his homely way deserves consideration. Thus wrote the author of “The Pilgrim’s Progress”:—

OF ELECTION.

“**1.** I believe that election is free and permanent, being founded in grace and the unchangeable will of God. ‘Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: other-wise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work’ (Romans 11:5, 6). ‘Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his’ (2 Timothy 2:19). ‘In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will’ (Ephesians 1:11).

“**2.** I believe that this decree, choice, or election, was before the foundation of the world; and so before the elect themselves had being in themselves; for, ‘God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were’ (Romans 4:17), stays not for the being of things to determine his eternal purpose by; but having all things present to him, in his wisdom, he made his choice before the world was. Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9.

“**3.** I believe that the decree of election is so far off from making works in us foreseen, the ground or cause of the choice, that it containeth in the bowels of it, not only the persons but the graces that accompany their salvation. And hence it is, that it is said, we are predestinated ‘to be conformed to the image of his Son’ (Romans 8:29), not because we are, but ‘that we SHOULD BE holy and without blame before him in love’ (Ephesians 1:4). ‘For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them’ (Ephesians 2:10). He blessed us according as he chose us in Christ. And hence it is again that the salvation and calling of which we are now made partakers, is no other than what was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 8:29.

“**4.** I believe that Christ Jesus is he in whom the elect are always considered, and that without him there is neither election, grace, nor salvation. ‘Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him' (Ephesians 1:5-7, 10). 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

"5. I believe that there is not any impediment attending the election of God that can hinder their conversion and eternal salvation. 'Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? ... Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?' etc. (Romans 8:30, 31; 33-35). 'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded' (Romans 11:7). 'For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel' (Jeremiah 51:5). When Ananias made intercession against Paul, saying, 'Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name,' what said God unto him? 'Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel' (Acts 9:13-15).

"6. I believe that no man can know his election, but by his calling. The vessels of mercy, which God afore prepared unto glory, do thus claim a share therein: 'Even us (say they), whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Osee [Hosea 2:23], I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not 'beloved' (Romans 9:24, 25).

"7. I believe, therefore, that election doth not forestall or prevent the means which are of God appointed to bring us to Christ, to grace and glory; but rather putteth a necessity upon the use and effect thereof; because they are chosen to be brought to heaven that way; that is, by the faith of Jesus Christ, which is the end of effectual calling. 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' 2 Peter 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:12."

QUESTIONS FOR “DOWN-GRADE” DOUBTERS.

(MARCH 1889)

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—At the recent meeting of the London Baptist Association, in endeavoring to show the inutility of the “seven statements” which it was proposed should be attached to Rule I. of the Constitution, I submitted the following seven questions. To these questions, which touch the very foundations of that mysterious theology in which so-called “Modern Thought” delights, no distinct answer is given by the seven statements. But, probably, they may be useful to others beside myself in the detection of error. I venture, therefore, to offer them to your readers for that purpose. The first question needs no explanation or comment.

I. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be an *infallible* and *sufficient* guide in all matters of religious faith and practice?

II. Do you believe in the DEITY as well as *divinity* of our Lord Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, that he is himself God?

Note that a man may acknowledge Christ to be divine, as he might acknowledge the Bible to be divine, without admitting that he is God.

III. Do you believe that Christ, in his death, endured the *penalty* due to divine justice for human guilt?

Note—Many admit that he died for us, but exclude the idea of penalty from his death.

IV. Do you believe the Holy Spirit to be, not only a divine influence, but, in the true, real, and proper sense of the term, a divine person, and himself God?

V. Do you believe man to have become, by sin, a fallen creature, and to have lost, by his fall, his original peaceful, happy, and holy relations with his Maker?

Note—Schiller described the Fall as “a giant stride in the history of the human race.”

VI. Do you believe that, by regeneration, man becomes possessed of a new and higher life, described as spiritual? that this life is only rendered possible by the mediatorial work of Christ? that it is only rendered actual by the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul? and that, apart from these means, it can never be enjoyed?

VII. Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead, as an event of the future, and not of continual recurrence?

I think, Mr. Editor, that these questions may be made of great service in determining the whereabouts of many a man, sermon, or book.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN TUCKWELL.

Bayswater.

[We agree with our correspondent that there is a ready way of dodging round the seven statements; but even such questions as those which he suggests will not bring slippery gentlemen to book. We feel ashamed to have to draw up statements, and put questions to those who should be brethren. Methods which the subtlety of error renders necessary are, nevertheless, greatly distasteful to simple, trustful hearts. We prefer to quit the company of those who plead that creeds have no binding power: they only too plainly avow their own characters. When one has to weigh words with a person, fellowship is out of the question. The phrases adopted by the L. B. A. look right enough, but it is clear that they can be every one of them evaded. Knowing what we do know of some who are called ministers of Christ, and in their heart of hearts do not believe the old gospel, we are saddened in soul, and wonder what next will come.—ED.]

NOTES.

(MAY 1889)

FRIENDS will have noticed the anxiety of the public press to put us into some ecclesiastical position which they can understand. To be the pastor of a church of Christ is enough for us; but it seems to them that we must join some one of the great religious communities: one day it is the Presbyterian, and the next the Episcopalian. Meanwhile, nothing has been said or done by us indicating any alteration in the position we have always held as to doctrine and church government. *When* we make a change, our friends will not need to learn it from the secular press: that *when* will not, probably, occur in this century, nor in the next. It does not yet dawn upon some minds that to quit a society like *the Baptist Union* involves no change in our position or sentiments. Baptist ministers are pastors of separate churches, which may associate with other churches, or cease to associate with them, as they judge best; but the minister and the church are not dependent upon the associations they may choose or decline. We are in fellowship with all the churches of our Lord Jesus which hold the truth, but have never entertained the thought of changing this way or that. Certainly we never dreamed of entering the Church of England.

The Baptist Union President, Dr. Clifford, took one of a series of Sunday afternoon addresses at South Place, Finsbury, a chapel which belongs to a people who are something more, or worse, than Unitarian. He figures with Messrs. Voysey and Picton, and others of the exceedingly broad school; and this not merely in his private capacity, but the bills are made clearly to state that he is President of the Baptist Union. This chapel is adorned with tablets, bearing the names of Moses, Voltaire, *Jesus*, Paine, Zoroaster, etc. The blasphemous association of our Lord with Thomas Paine and Voltaire creates an indescribable feeling in a Christian mind, and makes us wonder how a man, professing to be a servant of the Lord Jesus, could associate himself with such a place. Well might the Union resent our complaints against its more obscure wanderers, when its President, before he closed his year of office, would thus publicly associate himself with the deniers of our Lord's divinity. Has the body of Baptists over which this gentleman presides become so easy-going and docile that it will by its silence endorse the action of its President? Is it really so, that to preserve their confederacy any amount of looseness will be tolerated? We do not see that anything

worse can be invented than that which the governing party either condones or admires. On the “Down-Grade” the train travels very fast: another station has been passed. What next? And what next?

We would like to agree with one who says that the bulk of our church-members love the old gospel; but we are not quite sure of it. If there were so general a soundness in the rank and file, would they quietly endure the abounding errors of the pulpits, and the babyish amusements with which congregations are being drenched? We fear the plague is among the people as well as among the priests. Yet, surely, there must be some who will fling aside the dastard love of peace, and speak out for our Lord, and for his truth. A craven spirit is upon many, and their tongues are paralyzed. Oh, for an outburst of true faith and holy zeal!

In *The Sunday School Chronicle*, of April 12, occurs an editorial note, which concludes as follows:—”Almost all writers now recognize the *human* element in the Bible, and see that this brings in human infirmity in matters of detail. We had a letter from a friend the other day, and there were several mistakes of spelling in it, but the letter quite fully conveyed to us our friend’s thought. And if there are some inexactnesses, and even some mistakes, in the Bible, it carries to us, nevertheless, the mind and will of God. A lamp may give light to the feet on a dark night, even if the tin is a little bent in, and one of the panes is cracked.”

Is the Sunday School Union going to teach our youth that the Bible is like an old cracked lantern? To this we call the attention of those who are charged with the superintendence of the Union literature. Surely there are members of the Committee who cannot allow such teaching to pass unchallenged.

NOTES.

(JUNE 1889)

OWING to the extreme pressure upon us this month, the notes are necessarily brief.

In *The Freeman*, April 19, in an article referring to the appearance in South Place Chapel of the then President of the Baptist Union, it was said, “these lectures, it should be stated, are arranged by ‘The Ethical Society,’ of

which the Archbishop of Canterbury is the president.” Something else also should be stated. In answer to a letter, asking if the Archbishop was indeed in connection with the Ethical Society meeting in South Place, Finsbury, we received for answer: “His Grace is much obliged to you for giving him the opportunity of correcting the rumor as to his connection with the Ethical Society you mention. The report is, as you suppose, quite untrue—this being the first time the Archbishop has heard of the Society in question.” It does not matter much, but we may as well know the truth.

We receive daily notes concerning the departure from the truth of preachers in England and Scotland; and though the subject is wearisome to our heart, we cannot forbear entreating the Lord’s people to pray day and night for the afflicted church of God. He alone can stay the ever-growing evil, but he would have his people cry to him concerning it. The evil is by no means imaginary, but all too real. Our protest came not too soon, nor could it be too forcible. At this moment, those who have quitted the old faith may do what they please to silence papers and periodicals, but the evil reeks before high heaven. We trust it will not be long before the lovers of the gospel will awake to the danger, and speak out so as to be heard.

In the first week in June there are to be two special services at the Tabernacle. On *Tuesday evening*, 4th inst., Mr. John Courtney and the Southwark Choral Society are to help us praise the Lord with some of the grand old fugal tunes that ought never to have gone out of use. We shall be glad to see a large muster of friends who love those ancient melodies.

On *Thursday evening, June 6*, C. H. S. has promised to preach another sermon for the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society, when Mr. Matthews, the energetic secretary of the Society, has promised to bring as many sailors as he can muster. He is anxious to distribute the sermon, when it is published, among those that go down to the sea in ships; and he will be very grateful for all contributions that are given to him for that object.

The secretary of the Tram-car and ‘Bus Scripture Text Mission, Mrs. Wood, 53, Paternoster Row, E.C., asks us to call our readers’ attention to the fact that for 10s. a text can be placed in a tram or ‘bus, and maintained in a good position for a year. She will be very glad to receive donations.

COLLEGE.—Mr. A. G. Haste has settled at Carrickfergus; and Mr. Joseph Young has sailed for Jamestown, St. Helena.

Mr. F. R. Bateman has removed from Twickenham to Henley-in-Arden. Mr. F. Dann, who returned from Minnesota some months since, for his health's sake, has now sailed again for the United States.

Will all the members of the Pastors' College Evangelical Association kindly note that *Monday, June 24*, has been fixed for the day of SPECIAL UNITED PRAYER? Will our brethren everywhere try to make this a day of real wrestling prayer? If all the churches take it up heartily, we may look for large blessing.

EVANGELISTS.—Mr. J. E. Mathieson closes a very appreciative report of *Messrs. Fullerton and Smith's* services at Mildmay Park Conference Hall, as follows:—"I had not previously met with your valued evangelists, but I soon learned to appreciate and to love them I know of no two brethren more fitted for great and important work for the Master than these two. I wish friends in every large town in our land would seek to share in the benefit which a visit from them is likely to impart."

Since the Conference, our brethren have been at Dr. Barnardo's Mission-hall, The Edinburgh Castle, where great crowds attended the services, and many received the truth. They also conducted services on two afternoons and evenings at Beulah Chapel, Thornton Heath, where much blessing resulted.

Their future engagements are: June 1-9, Kilburn Hall; June 15-23, Bath Street Chapel, Poplar; June 30, Mildmay Park

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

DECEMBER, 1889.

THIS MUST BE A SOLDIERS' BATTLE.

By C. H. Spurgeon

ONE who is very valiant for the truth said to us, "*This must be a soldiers' battle.*" In that utterance we heartily concur. The gospel of the Lord Jesus is now assailed all along the line. Scarcely a denomination is free from the enemies of the truth: they are within our ranks. In the Church of England the superstitious errorists are more to the front than the skeptical; and it is not an easy warfare which falls to the lot of Evangelicals within the Establishment. How is it they are there? Those who are seeking a decision upon the matters raised by the action of the Bishop of Lincoln, are going straight to the point, and raising the question of Mass or no Mass in the most plain and practical manner. But if the result of the episcopal trial should be unfavorable, every Protestant man and woman should look upon the case as one for the personal conscience, and should, by individual action, drive the Evangelicals to a plain and unmistakable course of action.

Among Baptists, the great need is the personal investigation of the matters in debate by the members of our churches. It is clear that the members of the Council have nothing to say except by way of rebuke of any who protest against the growing error. The ministers also cry, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." If sturdy individuality took up the matter, and godly men were determined not to remain in league with those who depart from the truth, the issues would be speedy.

A Congregational minister asks for an opportunity for the rank and file of the ministry to speak; and his impression is, that ninety-five percent. would be found to be on the old lines. We sincerely wish that we could believe it; but we think he puts his percentage far too high. Still, if in our free churches there were fair opportunities for utterance, either by the voice or

through the press, we feel confident that the Broad School gentlemen would find themselves very much in the minority. But the hour of free speech will not come till the old Nonconforming spirit asserts itself in the pastors, deacons, and church-members, and the gag is taken off from the religions press. We are glad to hope that by other organs the truth will yet gain liberty to speak through the press. It is possible that a clique is now predominant, and that the mass of the people are misrepresented by them: if it be so, let them declare themselves.

The Free Church of Scotland must, unhappily, be for the moment regarded as rushing to the front with its new theology, which is no theology, but an opposition to the Word of the Lord. That church in which we all gloried, as sound in the faith, and full of the martyrs' spirit, has entrusted the training of its future ministers to two professors who hold other doctrines than those of its Confession. This is the most suicidal act that a church can commit. It is strange that two gentlemen, who are seeking for something newer and better than the old faith, should condescend to accept a position which implies their agreement, with the ancient doctrines of the church; but delicacy of feeling is not a common article nowadays, and the action of creeds is not automatic, as it would be if consciences were tender. In the Free Church there is a Confession, and there are means for carrying out discipline; but these will be worth nothing without the personal action of all the faithful in that community. Every man who keeps aloof from the struggle for the sake of peace, will have the blood of souls upon his head. The question in debate at the Disruption was secondary compared with that which is now at issue. It is *Bible or no Bible, Atonement or no Atonement*, which we have now to settle. Stripped of beclouding terms and phrases, this lies at the bottom of the discussion; and every lover of the Lord Jesus should feel himself called upon to take his part in an earnest contention for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. From the exceeding boldness of Messrs. Bruce and Dods, we gather that they feel perfectly safe in ventilating their opinions. They evidently reckon upon a majority which will secure them immunity; and our fear is that they will actually gain that which they expect. We are not sanguine enough to believe that they are mistaken. Unless the whole church shall awake to its duty, the Evangelicals in the Free Church are doomed to see another reign of Moderatism. Have they suffered so many things in vain? Will they not now make a stand?

Finding ourselves in a community which had no articles of faith, and seeing deadly error rising up, we had no course but to withdraw. Whether others think fit to do so or not is no part of our responsibility; but nothing can free any true believer from the duty of maintaining pure and undefiled religion in its doctrine, as well as in its practice, by every means in his power. The most quiet country minister, the most retiring deacon or elder, the most obscure Christian man or woman—each one must come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The crisis becomes every day more acute: delays are dangerous; hesitation is ruinous. Whosoever is on the Lord's side must show it at once, and without fail. Let those who so sadly pine for "another reformation," and a remodeled creed, stand out and say so, and no longer conceal their sentiments, or eat the bread of men at whose most cherished convictions they are stabbing with might and main. Let these be honest, and let the Evangelicals be true. The church expects every man to do his duty.

NOTES.

(FEB. 1890)

A certain newspaper paragraph very kindly attempts to comfort "Mr. Spurgeon at his worst stage of depression concerning the doubts of the day," by the assurance that religion can never pass away. We can assure our friend that we never thought it could. No fear as to the ultimate victory of the truth of God ever disturbs our mind. We are sure that the doctrines of the gospel will outlive all the dotings of "modern thought." The trouble is that, for the moment, error is having its own way in certain parts of the visible church, where better things once ruled; and, worse still, that good men will not see the evil, or, seeing it, wink at it, and imagine that it will do no very great deal of harm. It is ours to give warning of a danger which to us is manifest and alarming; and if the warning makes us the butt of ridicule, we must bear it. Our protest is, no doubt, regarded by some as a piece of bigotry, and by others, as the dream of a nervous mind. Neither conjecture is correct; but we speak the words of love and soberness. An American, who inquired of certain leaders in the "Down-Grade" what they thought of Spurgeon's conduct, was informed that sickness and age had weakened his intellect. This has been their contemptuous method all along; but facts are not to be set aside by such remarks. Be the protester what he

may, he declares his protest to be solemnly needful, and he begs for attention to it. It may be the old truth is in the minority, and that those who uphold it are thought to be troublers in Israel, and causers of false alarm: but we are none the less confident that, when good men return to their better selves, they will see differently. Bitterly will some regret that they allowed matters to drift, and drift, till they had wrought incalculable mischief. We have spoken in saddest earnest. It is no pleasure to us to stand apart, and refuse complicity with what we judge to be a great crime. Our witness is on high. The Lord will judge between us and the enemies of the faith in his own good time !

From a Congregational Church a brother writes :—” I have heard several friends say that your pictures of the ‘ Down-Grade ‘ are overdrawn; but in our church they have been photographs. Commencing with denial of eternal punishment, our minister has gone on to talk of ‘Mark’s garbled statements,’ ‘the legend of the Angel’s song,’ and ‘The myth of the Resurrection.’ He says, ‘Christ is the natural son of Joseph and Mary,’ and that ‘the Bible is but one of the Scriptures of the human race.’

May the churches heed your warning, and so be saved from our fate !” In this instance, old members are driven out, and all protesters are held up to ridicule in the public prints as bigots wanting in common sense.

The churches are, some of them, courting the fate of this church by seeking out clever men for preachers, irrespective of their doctrinal beliefs. But, on the other hand, many are growing cautious, and, having been once bitten, are shy of the new school. The evangelicals in the churches are beginning to be divided from the Broad School; and when the opportunity has occurred, they have been, in some cases, strong enough and bold enough to claim their rights. We wish it were so more generally; but we know several notable instances which put us in good hope that the present tyranny of falsehood will not last for ever. Still, these brighter signs are but gleams in a darkening sky. The men who take the lead are, in many cases, halfhearted as to truth, and they yield themselves up to the dogmatic assertions of the non-evangelical intruders. Tender as mothers to every new heresy-vendor, the men in office in the denominations have a hard, ungenerous side for the faithful adherents of the old gospel. We may go where we will—we are not worth a thought; but the most flippant blasphemer shall have honor for his courage and independence! Happily, this is a small matter to some of us now, for our ecclesiastical relationships

are for ever severed; but there is none the less of gross injustice in such conduct towards those who cannot turn their coats, or profess to love what they inwardly abhor.

NOTES.

(MAY 1891)

NUMBERS of friends now write to say how true our words upon the "Down-grade" were years ago. It is our deep regret that it should be so. We spoke not without knowing what we were about. It was not possible for us to give up all our authorities, nor would it have served any useful purpose to have published names; but we spoke truth which we could not help believing, and spoke it without exaggerating. Matters were even worse than we knew of. We have not only to do with the lion of open unbelief, but with the foxes of craft, who profess to love the gospel which they labor hard to undermine. If we had to bear our witness over again, we should not soften a syllable, but add emphasis to it.

Indignant correspondents continually send us notices of amusements held by various churches; certainly, they can hardly become more childish and inane. But we cannot be perpetually recording and talking about these absurdities. Cannot Christian people make their own protests more emphatic in their several districts? It is all very well to send this wretched rubbish to us; but why not sweep it away yourselves? If we had a gracious revival, good people would find better things to do than to get up nigger entertainments, and theatricals.

Our old-fashioned Wesleyan friends must be greatly surprised by the utterances of certain of their leading men; they have great need to look after the professors who train their rising ministry; for if they cannot give a better account of Holy Writ than the divine from Richmond, tutorship is in a poor way. The record given of the meeting, in the newspapers, was more alarming than the actual facts; for the seamy side of the talk was made more prominent than it really was; but the very best we can make of Professor Davison's paper, and the comments upon it, causes us great apprehension. With the delicate tread which reminds us of Agag, error enters as though it were a well-known and familiar friend. Certain books of the Bible are dealt with in reference to modern criticism with the air of one

who has settled the business, an placed the matter beyond dispute. Very modestly as to language, but very dogmatically as to statement, the Professor lay down the law. We do not accept a syllable of that unquestionable result of scholarship which he so coolly propounds.

Although upon the doctrines of grace our views differ from those avowed by Arminian Methodists, we have usually found that on the great evangelical truths we are in full agreement, and we have been comforted by the belief that Wesleyans were solid upon the central doctrines. We are truly sorry that we are now placed in doubt. Surely there are voices which will yet be heard. We know that there are hearts that are aching because of this last movement of leading religionists in the downward way but will anyone be bold enough to speak out? Ostracism seems to be dreaded so much, that good men and true hold their tongues. Nevertheless, we know the Holy Spirit did not use words at random, and we shall never consent to that liberalism which, in destroying the shell of the language, really kills the life-germ of the meaning.

“MR. SPURGEON’S CONFSSION OF FAITH.”

(AUGUST 1891)

QUITE a stir has been caused lately by the publication of the following document, which has been erroneously called “Mr. Spurgeon’s Confession of Faith,” or “Manifesto”:—

We, the undersigned, banded together in Fraternal Union, observing with growing pain and sorrow the loosening hold of many upon the Truths of Revelation, are constrained to avow our firmest belief in the Verbal Inspiration of all Holy Scripture as originally given. To us, the Bible does not merely *contain* the Word of God, but *is* the Word of God. From beginning to end, we accept it, believe it, and continue to preach it. To us, the Old Testament is no less inspired than the New. The Book is an organic whole. Reverence for the NEW Testament accompanied by skepticism as to the OLD appears to us absurd. The two must stand or fall together. We accept Christ’s own verdict concerning “Moses and all the prophets” in preference to any of the supposed discoveries of so-called higher criticism.

We hold and maintain the truths generally known as “the doctrines of grace.” The Electing Love of God the Father, the Propitiatory and Substitutionary Sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, Regeneration by the Holy Ghost, the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness, the Justification of the sinner (once for all) by faith, his walk in newness of life and growth in grace by the active indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the Priestly Intercession of our Lord Jesus, as also the hopeless perdition of all who reject the Savior, according to the words of the Lord in Matthew 25:46, “These shall go away into eternal punishment,”—are, in our judgment, revealed and fundamental truths.

Our hope is the Personal Pre-millennial Return of the Lord Jesus in glory.

C. H. SPURGEON.	J.A. BROWN, M.D.	F.B. MONTI
A. G. BROWN.	J.G. COX.	J.S. MORRIS.
J. DOUGLAS, M.A..	E.J. FARLEY.	H. SINCLAIR PATERSON, M.D.
W. FULLER GOOCH.	A. FERGUSSON.	FRANK M. SMITH.
G. D. HOOTER.	FINLAY GIBSON.	CHARLES SPURGEON.
J. STEPHENS, M.A.	CHARLES GRAHAM.	J.L. STANLEY.
FRANK H. WHITE.	J.W. HARRALD.	H. E. STONE.
J. H. BARNARD.	W. JACKSON.	W. THOMAS.
J. WESLEY BOUD.	W. R. LANE.	GEORGE TURNER.
W. H. BROAD.	H.O. MACKEY.	W. WILLIAMS.

Because Mr. Spurgeon’s name was appended to this avowal of belief, it was supposed that he wrote it, and issued it to the world. Some, *very* wise people even discovered that this was the creed that Mr. Spurgeon wanted to force down the unwilling throat of the Baptist Union! Poor souls, it is really a pity to be obliged to dispel such blissful ignorance! Yet dispelled it will be, as soon as the simple but true story of the manifesto is told.

About eighteen months ago, the seven brethren, whose names appear at the head of the above list, banded themselves together as a “Fraternal”; and from time to time they have invited other like-minded brethren to join them. Membership is not confined to Baptists. Dr. Sinclair Paterson belongs to the brotherhood, as did the late Dr. Adolph Saphir, until he was

called to the presence of the Lord he had so long and faithfully served. Several public meetings have been held, at which clear testimony upon the fundamental doctrines of the gospel has been given by various members. In addition, many private gatherings for prayer and consultation upon the Word and work of the Lord have taken place. At one of these, it was suggested (*not*, however, by Mr. Spurgeon) that the time had arrived when attention should be called, through the religious and secular press of the country, to certain truths which, in many quarters, are either ignored or rejected. The suggestion met with general approval, a committee was appointed to prepare the document; in due time it was submitted to the whole company, and when the exact wording had been settled, each member signed it in the form in which it has been published to the church and the world. It might just as well be called "Mr. Archibald Brown's Confession of Faith," or Mr. White's, or Mr. Hooper's, or Dr. Paterson's. It is as much theirs as it is Mr. Spurgeon's, and as much his as theirs; but no more appertaining to any one of the thirty than to all the rest.

It is certainly a "confession of faith" in this sense, that the brethren whose names are appended to it do *believe* what they there state, and they are not ashamed to *confess* their faith before any number of witnesses; but no one of them would think of regarding this short statement as a full declaration of all that he believes about the great verities of God. As for "Mr. Spurgeon's Confession of Faith," any one who wants to read *that* will find it "writ large" in the thirty-six volumes of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. If the reading of two thousand two hundred sermons is too great a task for the searcher after "Mr. Spurgeon's Confession of Faith," he will be able to get a condensation of it in the President's Address delivered at the last College Conference. We venture to repeat here almost the last words written by Mr. Spurgeon before his illness :—

"*The Greatest Fight in the World* is our testimony for the present moment. It is to be had in a neat form, and at a very small price—namely, sixpence. Nothing would please us more than to see it scattered by scores of thousands, and rousing a controversy on essential truths Those of our readers who abhor modern heresies, will be our true allies if they will help us in scattering this bombshell where it may do execution. In this address we speak without bitterness, but also without reserve. The present policy of the Down-grade men is to be quiet and cautious; but we shall no more copy their method than their doctrine. Our speech is outspoken. Friends

will be pleased to know that the demand for the first edition far exceeds our expectations. Why not go in for fifty thousand?"

A translation of "Mr. Spurgeon's Confession of Faith," that even men of the world can understand, will be found at the Stockwell Orphanage, where living faith shows itself in works of mercy for the widow and the fatherless (James 2:14-18).

The manifesto has not met with universal approval. *The Christian World* ridiculed "*The 'Faithful' Few*," by the quotation marks in the heading of a short article, in which it said :—"It is a document which few will read without a feeling of perplexity and sadness. These thirty gentlemen appear to regard themselves as a little band of faithful adherents to the truth amidst a faithless church. The profoundest thought, the highest learning, the devoutest inquiry, are by implication branded as treason to the truth, if they have reached conclusions different from those propounded in this manifesto. Infallibility would seem to be the reward of the resolute refusal to allow the light of science and scholarship to fall upon the divine Word. All must be wrong except the few who can pronounce this Shibboleth" Thank you, dear *Christian World*; but your censure is a choice compliment and commendation to every member of the Fraternal! *The Echo* called the manifesto "A Voice from Dark Ages." A northern newspaper wrote as follows:—"No one who does not possess the power to an alarming extent of persuading himself anything, can possibly, if he have any real acquaintance with the controversy, hold *the views as to the sense in which the Bible is divine revelation which prevailed, in almost all the churches fifty years ago*. It is not that theories have been formed; but facts have been brought to light which must modify old-fashioned opinions, and have already modified them to a considerable extent. It did not, however, require any new discoveries of criticism to disprove the dogma of verbal inspiration upon which Mr. Spurgeon and his friends insist as one of the prime essentials of Christianity. If it be an essential, then Christianity is no better than a myth. And these men, with all their boasted loyalty to religion, ought surely to see that in associating the Christian belief with unnecessary, unprovable, and directly disprovable dogma, they are doing the work of the atheist and unbeliever, who stand by smiling to see the process of destruction going on from within. If religion and verbal inspiration must stand or fall together, then it is the latter alternative which will happen—assuredly they will fall." The italics are ours.

The Baptist, in publishing the manifesto, said :—"It is perhaps remarkable, not so much for the signatories, as for the names which are conspicuous by their absence." Similar remarks have been made by other papers; but the writers of them appear not to have noticed the first words of the document :—"We, the undersigned, banded together in Fraternal Union." It is just what it professes to be, an avowal of belief made by the members of a Fraternal. If it is asked, "Why is Mr. So-and-so's name not there?" the answer is, "He is not a member of the Fraternal, and therefore his name has no right to be there." Many clergymen and ministers have written, expressing their willingness to sign the manifesto; and various signs indicate that there is a very widespread desire for some kind of union in which lovers of the old faith might join with brethren like-minded, without being compromised by association with those who are not one with them in the faith. That, however, was not the object of those who signed this paper. Fraternalism has been used often enough for the spread of Down-grade error; it therefore seemed right to make use of a Fraternal for the declaration of belief in Up-grade truth. If any Down-graders are not satisfied with what has been done, let them accept the challenge of the editor of *Word and Work*, himself one of the signatories of the document :—"Such a manifesto as this is at least timely, and the men who sign it make no secret of their creed. Is it too much to expect that those who have changed their beliefs will be honest enough to express in language similarly plain the extent of the change, that all the world may see clearly where they stand? It is a fair challenge; will it elicit a fair response?"

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A SERMON FOR THE TIME PRESENT.

NO. 1990

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
OCTOBER 30TH, 1887**

By C. H. Spurgeon

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.”—Zephaniah 3:16-18.

HOLY Scripture is wonderfully full and abiding in its inner sense. It is a springing well, whereat you may draw, and draw again; for as you draw, it springs up for ever new and fresh. It is a well of water springing up everlastingly. The fulfillment of a divine promise is not the exhaustion of it. When a man gives you a promise, and he keeps it, there is an end of the promise; but it is not so with God. When he keeps his word to the full, he has but begun: he is prepared to keep it, and keep it, and keep it for ever and ever. What would you say of a man who had wheat upon his barn floor, and threshed it until he had beaten out the last golden grain; but the next day he went and threshed again, and brought back as much as the day before; and on the day after, again taking his flail, he went to the same threshing, and again brought back his measure as full as at the first, and so on for all the days of the year? Would it not seem to you as a fairy tale? It would certainly be a surprising miracle. But what should we say if,

throughout a long life, this miracle could be prolonged.? Yet we have continued to thresh the promises ever since faith was given us, and we have carried away our full portion every day. What shall we say of the glorious fact that the saints in all generations, from the first day until now, have done the same; and of that equal truth, that as long as there is a needy soul upon earth, there will be upon the threshing floor of the promises the same abundance of the finest of the wheat as when the first man filled his measure and returned rejoicing? I will not dwell upon the specific application of the text before us: I do not doubt that it was specially fulfilled as it was intended; and if there still remains some special piece of history to which this passage alludes, it will again be fulfilled in due time; but this I know, that those who have lived between whiles have found this promise true to them. Children of God have used these promises under all sorts of circumstances, and have derived the utmost comfort from them; and this morning I feel as if the text had been newly written for the present occasion, for it is in every syllable most suitable to the immediate crisis. If the Lord had fixed his eye upon the condition of his church just now, and had written this passage only for this year of grace 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion. Our business shall be to show this; but I would aim at much more. Let our prayer be that we, may enjoy this marvelous portion of the sacred word, and take intense delight in it. As God rests in his love, so may we rest in it this morning; and as he joys over us with singing, so may we break forth into joyous psalms to the God of our salvation.

I am going to begin with the last verse of the text, and work my way upwards. The first; head is, *a trying day for God's people*. They are sorrowful because a cloud is upon their solemn assembly, and the reproach thereof is a burden. Secondly, we will note *a glorious ground of consolation*. We read in the seventeenth verse, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." And, thirdly, here is *a brave conduct suggested thereby*: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

I. Beginning at the eighteenth verse, we notice A TRYING DAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. *The solemn assembly had fallen under reproach*. The solemn assemblies of Israel were her glory: her great days of festival and sacrifice were the gladness of the land. To the faithful their holy days were their holidays. But a reproach had fallen upon the solemn assembly, and I

believe it is so now at this present moment. It is a, sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies *the brilliance of the gospel light is dimmed by error*. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people, and those who ought to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, are telling out for doctrines the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age. Instead of revelation, we have philosophy, falsely so-called; instead of divine infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is taught as the production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year. It is an ill day, both for the church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound; for who shall prepare himself for the battle?

If added to this we should see *creeping over the solemn assembly of the church a lifelessness, an indifference, and a lack of spiritual power*, it is painful to a high degree. When the vitality of religion is despised, and gatherings for prayer are neglected, what are we coming to? The present period of church history is well portrayed by the church of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore to be spewed out of Christ's mouth. That church gloried that she was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, while all the while her Lord was outside, knocking at the door, a door closed against him. That passage is constantly applied to the unconverted, with whom it has nothing to do: it has to do with a lukewarm church, with a church that thought itself to be in an eminently prosperous condition, while her living Lord, in the doctrine of his atoning sacrifice, was denied an entrance. Oh, if he had found admission—and he was eager to find it—she would soon have flung away her imaginary wealth, and he would have given her gold tried in the furnace, and white raiment with which she might be clothed. Alas ! she is content without her Lord, for she has education, oratory, science, and a thousand other baubles. Zion's solemn assembly is under a cloud indeed, when the teaching of Jesus and his apostles is of small account with her.

If in addition to this, *worldly conformity spreads in the church*, so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints, then is there reason enough for lamentation, even as Jeremiah cried: "How is the gold become dim!" Her Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, have become blacker than a coal. "All our enemies have opened their mouths against us." If no longer there is a clear distinction between the church and the world, but professed followers of Jesus have joined hands

with unbelievers, then may we mourn indeed ! Woe worth the day ! An ill time has happened to the church and to the world also. We may expect great judgments, for the Lord will surely be avenged on such a people as this. Know ye not of old that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they were joined unto them, then the flood came and swept them all away? I need not pursue this subject further, lest our burdens take from us the time which is demanded for consolation.

It appears from the text that *there were some to whom the reproach was a burden*. They could not make sport of sin. True, there were many who said that the evil did not exist at all, and others who declared that it was not present in any great degree. Yes, and more hardened spirits declared that what was considered to be a reproach was really a thing to be boasted of, the very glory of the century. Thus they huffed the matter, and made the mourning of the conscientious to be a theme for jest. But there was a remnant to whom the reproach of it was a burden; these could not bear to see such a calamity. To these the Lord God will have respect, as he said by the prophet :—”Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” The many drank wine in bowls and anointed themselves with their chief ointments, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6); but these were pressed in spirit and bore the cross, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. God’s people cannot bear that Christ’s atoning sacrifice should be dishonored; they cannot endure that his truth should be trodden as mire in the streets. To true believers prosperity means the Holy Ghost blessing the word to the conversion of sinners and the building up of saints; and if they do not see this, they hang their harps upon the willows. True lovers of Jesus fast when the Bridegroom is not with his church: their glow is in his glory, and in nothing else. The wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli, cried out in her dying agony, “The glory has departed,” and the reason that she gave was once because of the death of her husband and his father, but twice because “the ark of God is taken.” For this she named her new-born child Ichabod—. “The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.” The bitterest pain of this godly woman was for the church, and for the honor of our God. So it is with God’s true people: they lay it much to heart that the truth is rejected.

This burdened spirit, is a token of true love to God: those who love the Lord Jesus are wounded in his woundings, and vexed with the vexings of his Spirit. When Christ is dishonored his disciples are dishonored. Those who have a tender heart towards the church can say with Paul, “Who is offended, and I burn not?” The sins of the church of God are the sorrows of all living members of it. This also marks a healthy sensibility, a vital spirituality. Those who are unspiritual care nothing for truth or grace: they look to finances, and numbers, and respectability. Utterly carnal men care for none of these things; and so long as the political aims of Dissenters are progressing, and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful persecuted than see them desert the truth, sooner see churches in the depths of poverty full of holy zeal than rich churches dead in worldliness. Spiritual men care for the church even when she is in an evil case, and cast down by her adversaries: “thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.” The house of the Lord is to many of us our own house, his family is our family. Unless the Lord Jesus be extolled, and his gospel conquer, we feel that our own personal interests are blighted, and we ourselves are in disgrace. It is no small thing to us: it is our life.

Thus have I dwelt upon the fact that it is an ill day for God’s people when the solemn assembly is defiled: the reproach thereof is a burden to those who are truly citizens of the New Jerusalem, and because of this *they are seen to be sorrowful*. The Lord here says, “I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly.” They may well be sorrowful when such a burden is laid on their hearts. Moreover, they see in a hundred ways the ill effect of the evil which they deplore. Many are lame and halting; this is hinted at in the promise of the nineteenth verse: “I will save her that halteth.” Pilgrims on the road to Zion were made to limp on the road because the prophets were “light and treacherous persons.” When the pure gospel is not preached, God’s people are robbed of the strength which they need in their life-journey. If you take away the bread, the children hunger. If you give the flock poisonous pastures, or fields which are barren as the desert, they pine and they become lame in their daily following of the shepherd. The doctrinal soon affects the practical. I know many of the people of God living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no truth in which rest is to be found, but they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men. In many a place the sheep look up

and are not fed. This causes much disquietude and breeds doubts and questionings, and thus strength is turned to weakness, and the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope are all kept in a halting state. This is a grievous evil, and it is all around us. Then, alas! many are “driven out,” of whom the nineteenth verse says, “I will gather her that was driven out.” By false doctrine many are made to wander from the fold. Hopeful ones are made to stray from the path of life, and sinners are left in their natural distance from God. The truth which would convince men of sin is not preached, while other truths which would lead seekers into peace are beclouded, and souls are left in needless sorrow. When the doctrines of grace and the glorious atoning sacrifice are not set clearly before men’s minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow. It is terrible to me that this dreadful blight should come upon our churches; for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered, and even the strong are perplexed. The false teachers of these days would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. This makes our hearts very sorrowful. How can we help it?

Yet, beloved, all the time that the people of God are in this evil case, *they are not without hope*; for close upon all this comes the promise of the Lord to restore his wandering ones. We have the sense twice over: “I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.” “I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord. “The adversaries cannot silence the eternal testimony. They hanged our Lord himself upon a tree; they took down his body and buried it in a tomb in the rock; and they set their seal upon the stone which they rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher. Surely now there was an end of the Christ and his cause. Boast not, ye priests and Pharisees! Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! When the appointed time had come, the living Christ came forth. He could not be holden by the cords of death. How idle their dreams! “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord doth have them in derision.” Beloved, the reproach will yet be rolled away from the solemn assembly: the truth of God will yet again be proclaimed as with trumpet tongue, the Spirit of God will revive his church, and converts as many as the sheaves of the harvest shall yet be gathered in. How will the faithful rejoice! Those who were burdened and sorrowful shall then put on their garments of joy and beauty. Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The conflict is not doubtful. The end of the battle is sure

and certain. Methinks I even now hear the shout, “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

II. Secondly, let us think of something which shines like a star amid the darkness. The second verse of the text presents A GLORIOUS GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Here is a rich text indeed. This passage is like a great sea, while I am as a little child making pools in the sand which skirts its boundless flood. A series of discourses might well be founded on this one verse: I mean the seventeenth.

Our great consolation in the worst times lies in our God. The very name of our covenant God—”the Lord thy God”—is full of good cheer. That word, “the Lord,” is really JEHOVAH, the self-existent One, the unchangeable One, the ever-living God, who cannot change or be moved from his everlasting purpose. Children of God, whatever you have not got, you have a God in whom you may greatly glory. Having God you have more than all things, for all things come of him; and if all things were blotted out, he could restore all things simply by his will. He speaketh, and it is done; he commandeth, and it stands fast. Blessed is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his trust, and whose hope Jehovah is. In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength; let us trust in him for ever. Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come nigh unto us now that he is our defense. Jehovah, the God of his church, is also the God of each individual member of it, and each one may therefore rejoice in him. Jehovah is as much your God, my brother, as if no other person in the universe could use that covenant expression. O believer, the Lord God is altogether and wholly your God! All his wisdom, all his foresight, all his power, all his immutability—all himself is yours. As for the church of God, when she is in her lowest estate she is still established and endowed in the best possible sense—established by the divine decree, and endowed by the possession of God all-sufficient. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Let us exult in our possession. Poor as we are, we are infinitely rich in having God; weak as we are, there is no limit to our strength, since the Almighty Jehovah is ours. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” If God be ours, what more can we need? Lift up thy heart, thou sorrowful one, and be of good cheer. If God be thy God, thou hast all thou canst desire: wrapped up within his glorious name we find all things for time and eternity, for earth and heaven. Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners, and march onward to the battle. He is our God by his own purpose,

covenant, and oath; and this day he is our God by our own choice of him, by our union with Christ Jesus, by our experience of his goodness, and by that spirit of adoption whereby we cry “Abba, Father.”

To strengthen this consolation, we notice next, that *this God is in the midst of us*. He is not a long way off, to be sought with difficulty, if haply we may find him. The Lord is a God nigh at hand, and ready to deliver his people. Is it not delightful to think that we cry not to God across the ocean, for he is here? We look not up to him from afar, as though he dwelt beyond the stars, neither do we think of him as hidden in the fathomless abyss; but the Lord is very near. Our God is “Jehovah in the midst of thee.” Since that bright night in which a babe was born at Bethlehem, and unto us a Son was given, we know God as “Emmanuel, God with us.” God is in our nature, and therefore very near unto us. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Though his bodily presence is gone, yet we hare his spiritual presence with us evermore; for he saith, “Lo, I am with you always.” He walketh among the golden candlesticks. We have also the immediate presence of God the Holy Spirit. He is in the midst of the church to enlighten, convince, quicken, endow, comfort, and clothe with spiritual power. The Lord still works in the minds of men for the accomplishment of his purposes of grace. Let us think of this when we are going forth to Christian service: “The Lord of hosts is with us.” When you call your class together in the Sabbath school, say to your Lord, “If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.” Ah, friends! if we have God with us, we can bear to be deserted by men. What a word that is, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them!” Shall not the army shout when the King himself is in their ranks! Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered! When he is with us they that hate him must flee before him. Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the presence of God with us, that if we could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest, and our heaven would begin below.

Let us go a step further, and note that our consolation is largely to be found in the fact that *this God in the midst of us is full of power to save*. “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save.” That is to say, “Jehovah, thy God, is mighty to save.” His arm is not shortened, he is still “a just God and a Savior.” Nor is he merely able to save, but he will display that ability; “he will save.” Come, my brother, we see around us this and that to discourage us; let us, like David, encourage ourselves in the

Lord our God. We may very well forget all difficulties, since the God who is in the midst of us is mighty to save. Let us pray, then, that he will save; that he will save his own church from lukewarmness and from deadly error; that he will save her from her worldliness and formalism; save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members. Let us lift up our *eyes* and behold the power which is ready to save; and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions. Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we want before all things. This would smite the enemy upon the cheek-bone, and break the teeth of the adversary. If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the sovereign grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith! Oh, for times such as our fathers saw when first Whitefield and his helpers began to preach the life-giving word! When one sweet voice was heard clear and loud, all the birds of paradise began to sing in concert with him, and the morning of a glorious day was heralded. Oh, if that were to happen again, I should feel like Simeon when he embraced the heavenly babe! Then would the virgin daughter of Zion shake her head at the foe, and laugh him to scorn. It may happen; yea, if we are importunate in prayer it must happen: "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Let us not seek power of rhetoric, much less of wealth; but let us look for the power which saves. This is the one thing I crave. Oh, that God would save souls! I say to myself, after being badgered and worried through the week by the men of modern thought: "I will go my way and preach Christ's gospel, and win souls." One lifting up of Jesus Christ crucified is more to me than all the cavilings of the men who are wise above what is written. Converts are our unanswerable arguments. "Happy is the man," saith the Psalm, "that hath his quiver full of them: they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Blessed is the man who has many spiritual children born to God under his ministry; for his converts are his defense. Beholding the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. If souls are saved by the gospel, the gospel is proved in the surest manner. Let us care more about conversions than about organizations. If souls are brought into union with Christ, we may let other unions go.

We go yet further, and we come to great deeps: behold *God's joy in his people*. "He will rejoice over thee with joy." Think of this! Jehovah, the living God, is described as brooding over his church with pleasure. He looks upon souls redeemed by the blood of his dear Son, quickened by his

Holy Spirit, and his heart is glad. Even the infinite heart of God is filled with an extraordinary joy at the sight of his chosen. His delight is in his church, his Hephzibah. I can understand a minister rejoicing over a soul that he has brought to Christ; I can also understand believers rejoicing to see others saved from sin and hell; but what shall I say of the infinitely-happy and eternally-blessed God finding, as it were, a new joy in souls redeemed? This is another of those great wonders which cluster around the work of divine grace! “He will rejoice over thee with joy.” Oh, you are trembling for the ark of the Lord; the Lord is not trembling, but rejoicing. Faulty as the church is, the Lord rejoices in her. While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope; for God does not sorrow, his heart is glad, and he is said to rejoice with joy—a highly emphatic expression. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, imperfect though they be. He sees them as they are to be, and so he rejoices over them, even when they cannot rejoice in themselves. When your face is blurred with tears, your eyes red with weeping, and your heart heavy with sorrow for sin, the great Father is rejoicing over you. The prodigal son wept in his Father’s bosom, but the Father rejoiced over his son. We are questioning, doubting, sorrowing, trembling; and all the while he who sees the end from the beginning knows what will come out of the present disquietude, and therefore rejoices. Let us rise in faith to share the joy of God. Let no man’s heart fail him because of the taunts of the enemy. Rather let the chosen of God rouse themselves to courage, and participate in that joy of God which never ceaseth, even though the solemn assembly has become a reproach. Shall we not rejoice in him when he, in his boundless condescension, deigns to rejoice in us? Whoever despairs for the cause, he does not; wherefore let us be of good courage.

It is added, “*He will rest in his love.*” I do not know any Scripture which is more full of wonderful meaning than this. “He shall rest in his love,” as if our God had in his people found satisfaction. He comes to an anchorage: he has reached his desire. As when a Jacob, full of love to Rachel, has at length ended the years of his service, and is married to his well-beloved, and his heart is at rest; so is it spoken in parable of the Lord our God. Jesus sees of the travail of his soul when his people are won to him; he has been baptized with his baptism for his church, and he is no longer straitened, for his desire is fulfilled. The Lord is content with his eternal choice, content with his loving purposes, satisfied with the love which went forth from everlasting. He is well pleased in Jesus—well pleased with all the glorious

purposes which are connected with his dear Son, and with those who are in him. He has a calm content in the people of his choice, as he sees them in Christ. This is a good ground for our having a deep satisfaction of heart also. We are not what we would be; but then we are not what we shall be. We advance slowly; but then we advance surely. The end is secured by omnipotent grace. It is right that we should be discontented with ourselves, yet this holy restlessness should not rob us of our perfect peace in Christ Jesus. If the Lord hath rest in us, shall we not have rest in him? If he rests in his love, cannot we rest in it?

My heart is comforted as I plainly see in these words love unchanging, love abiding, love eternal: "he will rest in his love." Jehovah changes not. Being married to his people, "he hateth putting away." Immutability is written on his heart. The turtle-dove, when he has once chosen his mate, remains faithful throughout life, and if the beloved dies, he will, in many cases, pine away with grief for her, for his life is wrapped up in hers. Even so our Lord hath made his choice of his beloved, and he will never change it: he died for his church, and so long as he lives he will remember his own love, and what it cost him: "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "He will rest in his love."

The love of God to us is undisturbed: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," dwells with his love: he is not disquieted about it, but peacefully loves, and is never moved. The calm of God is wonderful to contemplate: his infallible knowledge and infinite power put him beyond fear or question. He sees no cause of alarm as to his redeemed, nor as to the cause of truth and the reign of righteousness. As to his true church, he knows that she is right, or that he will make her right. She is being transformed into the image of Jesus, and he rests in the full assurance that the image will ere long be complete. He can carry out his own purposes in his own way and time. He can see the harvest as well as the sowing; therefore he doth "rest in his love." You have seen a mother wash her child, and as she washes its face the child perhaps is crying, for it does not for the present enjoy the cleansing operation. Does the mother share the child's grief? Does she also cry? Oh, no! she rejoices over her babe, and rests in her love, knowing that the light affliction of the little one will work its real good. Often our griefs are no deeper than the cry of a child because of the soap in its eyes. While the church is being washed with tribulations and persecutions, God is resting in his love. You and I are wearying, but God is resting.

“He shall rest in his love.” The Hebrew of this line is, “He shall be silent in his love.” His happiness in his love is so great, that he does not express it, but keeps a happy silence. His is a joy too deep for words. No language can express the joy of God in his love; and therefore he uses no words. Silence in this case is infinitely expressive. One of the old commentators says, “He is deaf and dumb in his love,” as if he heard no voice of accusation against his chosen, and would not speak a word of upbraiding to her. Remember the silence of Jesus, and expound this text thereby.

Sometimes also the Lord does not speak to his people: we cannot get a cheering word from him; and then we sigh for a promise, and long for a visit of his love; but if he be thus silent, let us know that, he is only silent in his love. It is not the silence of wrath, but of love. His love is not changed, even though he does not comfort us.

*“His thoughts are high, his love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend;
And though he does not always smile,
He loves unto the end.”*

When he does not answer our prayers with his hand, he yet hears them with his heart. Denials are only another form of the same love which grants our petitions. He loves us, and sometimes shows that love better by not giving us what we ask than he could do if he spoke the sweetest promise which the ear has ever heard. I prize this sentence: “He shall rest in his love.” My God, thou art perfectly content with thy church after all, because thou knowest what she is to be. Thou seest how fair she will be when she comes forth from the washing, having put on her beautiful garments. Lo, the sun goes down, and we mortals dread the endless darkness; but thou, great God, seest the morning, and thou knowest that in the hours of darkness dews will fall which shall refresh thy garden. Ours is the measure of an hour, and thine the judgment of eternity, therefore we will correct our short-sighted judgment by thine infallible knowledge, and rest with thee.

The last word is, however, the most wonderful of all: “*He will joy over thee with singing.*” Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song: Father, Son and Holy Ghost together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which he bears to his people that he breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy.

Among Orientals a certain song is sung by the bridegroom when he receives his bride: it is intended to declare his joy in her, and in the fact that his marriage has come. Here, by the pen of inspiration, the God of love is pictured as married to his church, and so rejoicing in her that he rejoices over her with singing. If God sings, shall not we sing? He did not sing when he made the world. No; he looked upon it, and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy: creation was very wonderful to them, but it was not much to God, who could have made thousands of worlds by his mere will. Creation could not make him sing; and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from him, for he could arrange a thousand kingdoms of providence with ease. But when it came to redemption, that cost him dear. Here he spent; eternal thought, and drew up a covenant with infinite wisdom. Here he gave his Only-begotten Son, and put him to grief to ransom his beloved ones. When all was done, and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of his redeemed, then he rejoiced after a divine manner. What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary! Here we are among the Atlantic waves. The Lord God receives an accession to the infinity of his joy in the thought of his redeemed people. "He shall rejoice over thee with singing." I tremble while I speak of such themes, lest I should say a word that should dishonor the matchless mystery; but still we are glad to note what is written, and we are bound to take comfort from it. Let us have sympathy with the joy of the Lord, for this will be our strength.

III. I close with a brief word upon THE BRAVE CONDUCT SUGGESTED THEREBY. Let us not sorrow under the burdens which we bear, but rejoice in God, the great Burden-bearer, upon whom this day we roll our load. Here it is—"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

There are three things for God's people to do. The first is, to *be happy*. Read verse fourteen—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." Any man can sing when his cup is full of delights; the believer alone has songs when waters of a bitter cup are wrung out to him. Any sparrow can chirp in the daylight; it is only the nightingale that can sing in the dark. Children of God, whenever the enemies seem to prevail over you, whenever the serried ranks of the foe appear sure of victory, then begin to sing. Your victory will come with your song. It is a very puzzling thing to the devil to hear saints sing when he sets his foot on them. He cannot make it out: the more he oppresses

them, the more they rejoice. Let us resolve to be all the merrier when the enemy dreams that we are utterly routed. The more opposition, the more we will rejoice in the Lord: the more discouragement, the more confidence. Splendid was the courage of Alexander when they told him that there were hundreds of thousands of Persians. "Yet," he said, "one butcher fears not myriads of sheep." "Ah!" said another, "when the Persians draw their bows, their arrows are so numerous that they darken the sun." "It will be fine to fight in the shade." cried the hero. O friends, we know whom we have believed, and we are sure of triumph! Let us not think for a single second, if the odds against us are ten thousand to one, that this is a hardship; rather let us wish that they were a million to one, that the glory of the Lord might be all the greater in the conquest which is sure. When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, then he said, "I, Athanasius, against the world": *Athanasius contra mundum* became a proverbial expression. Brethren, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength, and possibly they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better: there is the more room for God. When desertions have cleaned the place out, and left you no friend, now every corner can be filled with Deity. As long as there is so much that is visible to rely upon, and so much to hope in, there is so much the less room for simple trust in God: but now our song is of the Lord alone; "for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

The next duty is *fearlessness*: "Fear thou not." What ! not a little? No, "Fear thou not." But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, "Fear thou not." Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief. "Fear thou not": neither this day, nor any day of thy life. When fear comes in, drive it away; give it no space. If God rests in his love, and if God sings, what canst thou have to do with fear? Have you never known passengers on board ship, when the weather was rough, comforted by the calm behavior of the captain? One simple-minded soul said to his friend, "I am sure there is no cause for fear, for I heard the captain whistling." Surely, if the captain is at ease, and with him is all the responsibility, the passenger may be still more at peace. If the Lord Jesus at the helm is singing, let us not be fearing. Let us have done with every timorous accent. O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." Lastly, let us *be*

zealous: “Let not thine hands be slack.” Now is the time when every Christian should do more for God than ever. Let us plan great things for God, and let us expect great things from God. “Let not thine hands be slack.” Now is the hour for redoubled prayers and labors. Since the adversaries are busy, let us be busy also. If they think they shall make a full end of us, let us resolve to make a full end of their falsehoods and delusions. I think every Christian man should answer the challenge of the adversaries of Christ by working double tides, by giving more of his substance to the cause of God, by living more for the glory of God, by being more exact in his obedience, more earnest in his efforts, and more importunate in his prayers. “Let not thine hands be slack” in any one part of holy service. Fear is a dreadful breeder of idleness; but courage teaches us indomitable perseverance. Let us go on in God’s name. I would stir up the members of this church, and all my brethren, to intense zeal for God and the souls of men. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Would God that all were on Christ’s side out of this great assembly! Oh, that you would come to Jesus, and trust him, and then live for him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation! The Lord be with us.
Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Zephaniah 3.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46, 731, 18.

THE “DOWN GRADE” CONTROVERSY FROM MR. SPURGEON’S STANDPOINT

(FROM THE *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*,
VOLUME IV, PAGES 254-264)

MR. SPURGEON’S Standard Life could not be complete without a reference to that most sorrowful but important episode, — The “Down-grade” Controversy ; — yet how shall I dare to touch the strings of that rifted lute? The lightest and most skillful fingers could scarcely draw harmony from it now, and I would fain not be expected to awaken any of its discords. Oh, for the guiding Hand to be laid on heart and brain and pen, that gently and tenderly, albeit truthfully, the outlines of the sad story may be given!

There are many dear and able friends who could write the full history of the Controversy; but, after much thought and prayer, I have been led to allow the shadow of the past to rest upon it in a measure, and to conceal, under a generous silence, most of the documentary and other evidence which could be produced to prove the perfect uprightness, veracity, and fidelity of my dear husband throughout the whole of the solemn protest which culminated in the “vote of censure” by the Council of the Baptist Union! Therefore, in accordance with the autobiographical character of this record, the Controversy is sketched from Mr. Spurgeon’s own point of view; — he tells the story in his own way, so that only as much as he chose to make known of the deepest grief of his noble life is chronicled in these pages.

For the information of readers of the *Autobiography*, who are unacquainted with my beloved’s articles upon “The Down-grade,” I thought it might be well to include in this chapter a condensation, or summary of them; but, on reading them with that object in view, I find it

impossible to strike out a single word of his protest. It is equally impossible to transfer it all to this work, so the only course open to me is to omit it altogether, and to leave the testimony still to speak for itself from the pages of *The Sword and the Trowel*. From August, 1887, to February, 1892, scarcely any number of the magazine appeared without some reference to the Controversy and its various issues. The most pathetic "Note" of all was written within a few days of my dear husband's home-going, for in it he revealed the fact, already known to all who were nearest and dearest to him, that his fight for the faith had cost him his life. Yet he never regretted the step he had taken; for, throughout the whole affair, he felt such a Divine compulsion as Luther realized when he said, "I can do no other."

So far as the Baptist Union was concerned, little was accomplished by Mr. Spurgeon's witness-bearing and withdrawal. The compromise at the City Temple, in April, 1888, confirmed the position of the modern-thought men in the Union, and made "the vote of censure" the act of the whole assembly with the exception of the noble seven who voted against it. But, in other respects, I have had abundant proofs that the protest was not in vain. Many, who were far gone on "the Down-grade," were stopped in their perilous descent, and, by God's grace, were brought back to the Up-line; others, who were unconsciously slipping, were made to stand firmly upon the Rock; while, at least for a time, in all the churches, Evangelical doctrines were preached with a clearness and emphasis which had long been lacking.

The ultimate results of the whole matter must be left in the hands of Him who never makes a mistake, and who will, in His own right way, vindicate His obedient and faithful servant from the "censure" so unjustly passed upon him.

Not long after Mr. Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Baptist Union, he went to the South of France for much-needed rest; and the letters he there wrote, during that time of suffering and reproach, contained many allusions to the painful subject. Naturally, those written to me referred to the more personal and private aspects of the Controversy, as the following extracts will show : —

"I was greatly surprised at the note from — (one of 'our own men'), but when we are in a battle, we must expect calamities. It is a serious matter to know *how* to act; but one thing is plain enough, I must go on clearing myself of union with those who belong to the broad school. I felt so well,

this afternoon, when sitting under the palms, and as happy as a birdie beneath the blue sky. Then came the letter, just to sober me, and drive me from the sunshine to my Lord, who is the Sun itself. I can bear anything for Jesus while His everlasting arms are underneath me. The hills around Hyeres are called 'the mountains of paradise,' but the serpent comes even here. Ah, well! the Serpent-Killer is with us, and He will subdue all things unto Himself. I am sorry that the evil flood should carry away one of my men; but the wonder is, that more have not gone. It shows how much more evil was abroad than I dreamed of. I have done my duty, even if all men forsake me. Those who write in *The Freeman* and *The Christian World* show how everything I do can be misconstrued. Nevertheless, I know what I have done, and why I did it; and the Lord will bear me through. In Him I rest, and I am in no haste to answer opponents, nor even to think about them in a depressing way. What a providence that I am here, out of call! Luther was best at the Wartburg, was he not? I did not plan this, nor plan anything.

“What a farce about my seeing these brethren, privately, according to Matthew 18:15! Why, I saw the Secretary and the President again and again; and then I printed my plaint, and only left the Union when nothing could be done. Now, something will be done. Not until I took the decided step could I effect anything. Luther was very wrong to nail up his theses on the church door; he should have seen the Pope, and prayed with him! Do not let these things distress you, for my sake. The Lord will give both of us the heroic spirit and we shall neither fear men, nor become ungenerous toward them.”

“Canon Sidebotham called yesterday to assure me of the sympathy of all Christian Churchmen, and his belief that my stand for truth will help all believers. He told me that he meets with amazing skepticism among young men whom he has been called to visit in sickness, and he believes there is an epidemic of it everywhere. He says the antidote was needed, and came just at the right time. So may God grant!

“How I do delight in the Lord! I am now consciously nearer to Him than ever before, and I revel in a sense of blessedness. I am delivered from all fear of failing in this battle; and the Lord, whom I sought to honor, bows me low at His feet in gratitude for His tender mercies. We are safe in His hands. This is where I love to feel that I am, and that you are, and the dear boys, and the Church, and the College, and 'the Down-grade,' and all !” “I

trust I may be made stronger for the stern task which awaits me; but I try not even to think of *that*, but just to abandon myself to a bath of rest. This, I trust, is the wisest course; and yet I keep on longing to be doing some good, or bearing some fruit unto the Lord. Little occasions for this do occur, and I am eager to use them aright.

“Yesterday was eventful. First came a telegram, saying that there had been a hot discussion, and that my brother had left the Council meeting in indignation because my veracity had been impugned. Just as I was going to rest came another telegram:—‘Council has appointed Culross, McLaren, Clifford, and myself to confer with you at Mentone, without delay, to deliberate with you how the unity of our denomination in truth, and love, and good works may be maintained. When can we see you? Letter sent. Booth.’ Think of four doctors of divinity coming all this way to see me! I was in great perplexity, and knew not what to reply. I don’t quite see what it all means. I lay awake till one o’clock, and then got a pencil, and wrote out a telegram:—‘Cannot reply without further information. Respectfully request deputation to await my return. Tone of discussion suggests caution. Will write.’ Afterwards, I wrote a letter. Briefly, I urge them not to come so far;—it would be four to one, and I should be at the disadvantage of having been the cause of great expense. If they really mean brotherly conference, I will see them when I return, right gladly; that is to say, if I find there is any use in it. Now I shall need wisdom. I do not fear four doctors, but I think it a very wise move on their part. If it means that they will surrender, it is well; but if it is meant to fix on me the odium of being implacable, it is another matter. In any case, the Lord will prepare me for all that is to happen. It is of His mercy that I am here, or I should not be able to bear it all; but being quiet, and rested, and not worried by personal assaults, I can look round the question calmly.

“The four doctors are not coming. Very likely my brother will call to tell you about the affray. He was justly wroth, and describes the Council meeting as ‘horrible.’ For Dr. Booth to say I never complained, is amazing. God knows all about it, and He will see me righted. I have just received a letter from England in the words of Jeremiah 15:19, 20.” That passage was so peculiarly appropriate to the circumstances of the case, that many friends afterwards sent it to my beloved, who was greatly comforted by the reassuring message which was thus repeatedly conveyed to him.

During that visit to Mentone, an incident occurred, to which Mr. Spurgeon often gratefully referred as a remarkable token of the Lord's approval of his protest against false doctrine and worldliness. Before I give extracts from his letters concerning it, a brief explanation is necessary. For many years before this eventful period of my dear husband's life, he had been most generously aided in all his beneficent plans and purposes by a friend to whom God had given abundance of this world's wealth. These supplies came with loving freeness, and invariable regularity; and more than a mere hint was given that they might be depended on while the donor had it in his power to be thus royally open-handed. However, Mr. Spurgeon's attitude in the "Down-grade" Controversy alienated the heart of this friend, and caused him to withdraw altogether the splendid help which had, for so long a period, exempted my beloved from much financial anxiety.

The letter, announcing this failure of friendship and sympathy, arrived during Mr. Spurgeon's absence at Mentone, and it therefore became my duty to open and read it. Then followed one of those hallowed enlargements of heart which leave their mark for ever on the life of the person experiencing them. At once, I took the letter, and spread it before the Lord, pleading, as Hezekiah did, that He would "hear and see" the words written therein; and He gave me so strong a confidence in His overruling and delivering power that, as I knelt in His presence, and told Him how completely I trusted Him on my husband's behalf, the words of petition ceased from my lips, and I absolutely *laughed aloud*, so little did I fear what man could do, and so blessedly reliant did He make me on His own love and omnipotence!

In this exultant frame of mind, I wrote to Mentone, making light of the trouble, and endeavoring to parry the blow which I knew must sorely wound the sensitive heart of my beloved. I told him, too, how the Lord had "made me to laugh" as I was laying the matter before Him, and had filled me with righteous scorn and indignation at the means used to dishearten him in his sublime stand for the truths of the old gospel. So, as far as I was able, being absent from him, I comforted and upheld my much-trying spouse. In less time than I had thought possible, I received this telegram:—"I laugh with you. The Lord will not fail us, nor forsake us;"—and, by the next post, there came a letter recording the dear writer's unswerving faith in the God, whose he was, and whom he served, and to whom he left all the issues of that painful trial. The following extract will indicate the spirit in which he wrote:—

“Mentone,
“Nov. 18, 1887.

“You are as an angel of God unto me. When I began to read your letter, I trembled, for I could not tell what was coming; but when I finished it, I could laugh with you. Bravest of women, strong in faith, you have ministered unto me indeed and of a truth. God bless thee out of the seventh heavens!

“I do not know that I have ever before really suffered any loss for Christ’s sake; I feel decorated and elevated by this honor. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. But our friend uses a queer sort of argument! I am to be set right;—therefore, stop the supplies to God’s work! The fire must be put out;—whip the child! I do not see the connection between the end desired and the means used. Your loving sympathy has fully repaid me already. I rejoice in the Lord who has dealt bountifully with me hitherto. All that I possess belongs to Him.

*“There, take an inventory of all I have,
To the last penny; ‘tis the King’s.”*

While this correspondence was passing to and fro, the Lord was working on behalf of His dear servant in a wonderful way. Writing to one of his deacons, Mr. Spurgeon said:—“I have had a very remarkable deliverance out of a pecuniary difficulty inflicted upon me in consequence of the ‘Down-grade’ Controversy. It is as nearly a miracle as anything I ever heard of. The living God guards me on every side, and covers my head. To Him be praise!”

A lady from the Antipodes, who was staying in London, afterwards related that, during the time under consideration, she felt an overpowering impression that she must go to Mr. Spurgeon, in the South of France, and carry him some financial help to meet a special emergency. She said that, on other occasions, when similar intimations had come to her, she had obeyed her Lord’s commands, and in each instance had found that she had been infallibly guided by Him, so she at once made arrangements for the thousand miles’ journey. The amount she was to give was not at first revealed to her, nor did she know exactly where she was to go, as it had been announced that Mr. Spurgeon would be moving from place to

place. However, the Lord, who had entrusted her with the commission, directed her to Mentone; and, on her arrival there, she was further guided to the Hotel Beau Rivage. What happened there, my beloved thus records:—

“An awe is upon me as I write to you, for I feel the Lord to be so near. On Tuesday evening, there came to this hotel three ladies who asked if Mr. Spurgeon were here, and left cards. The next morning, they were at our family worship; and, today, Mrs. R___ gave me the enclosed letter, and cheque for 100! I told her of my trouble afterwards, I had not mentioned it before, and I read to her a few sentences of your dear letter. ‘There,’ she said, ‘that is the Lord’s reason for moving me to give it to you; *let it go to make up the lack for the next six months.*’ I worshipped the Lord with a thrilling joy. She added, ‘I do not doubt but that the Lord will see you right through the difficulty.’ I believe so, too, and that all the help will come from someone who does *not* know of my special need, so that it will be the more conspicuously ‘of the Lord.’ The money will be surer from Him than from Mr. ___, although he promised it for life. It may be very childish of me, but I could not help sending you the very cheque and letter, that you may see with your eyes what the Lord sent me. How this lady came to know my hotel, I cannot imagine, but Mr. Harrald says that He who sent her knew where I was.

“Our College men have met, with grand result; the only dissentient being one who is, practically, out of the ministry. Yesterday, I went to see an afflicted gentleman, whose deceased wife was Miss Havergal’s sister. His doctor met me, just now, and told me that I had done his patient great good. I was, however, the greater gainer, for he read me three letters from his son, a clergyman in Islington, in which he told his father to be sure to meet me, and wrote very many kind things, which I am not egotistical enough to repeat; but he said that all who loved the Lord, whom he knew, were bearing me up on their hearts. Truly, I am delivered from all fear of failing in this battle, which is the Lord’s, not mine. I feel as if I must not write about anything else upon these two sheets. ‘Holiness unto the Lord,’ is written on them; and the domestic matters must go on another sheet of paper. Oh, how I praise the Lord for *you!* You are dear to me, as a woman and a wife, beyond all expression; but now,

more fully than ever, we wear the yoke of Christ together, and mutually bear the double burden of service and suffering for Him.”

Less than a week after the above letter was received, my husband wrote as follows:— “Prepare for further rejoicing. We had been out driving all day, and when I came in, I found your dear letter, and saw you sitting ‘in Expectation Corner,’ *with the door open*. Please receive the fresh token which the Lord has sent in the form of a second 100! Letter and cheque enclosed. What hath God wrought! I never gave Mrs. R___ a shadow of a hint. I never thought she would do more. Why should she? But, as you say, ‘the living God does deliver His children.’ How I praise Him! Or, rather, how I do wish I could praise Him, but I feel as if my gratitude was cold and superficial when contrasted with His great goodness ! Blessed be His Name for ever!

“What a dear soul you are! How I love you! Our inward and spiritual union has come out in this trial and deliverance. We will record all this to the glory of the Lord our God. The weather here is rather of Heaven than of earth; warm, clear, bright, and yet life-giving and refreshing. The toothache touches me every now and then; but, moderated by interludes of ease, I hardly ought to mention it, my mercies are so great. What are pains when God is so near? This one theme is so predominant in my soul, that I cannot write about anything else. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock!

“Send cheque to Bank. Sing the Doxology. Keep all my love, and rest under the blessing of the Lord our God.”

After Mr. Spurgeon’s return from Mentone, he wrote to this friend, concerning the Controversy:—

“I have had to lean on the bare arm of God. It is a grand sensation. An arm of flesh loses all charms after we have once leaned on the greater power. What a Lord we serve! True indeed is His Word, and it is profitable to be made to prove its truth in storm and wreck. What folly it seems to try to explain it away! Its keenest edge wounds nothing but that which is false and foul. I would sooner be slain by the Word of the Lord than live by the lie of the devil.”

After the letters to myself, probably those written to the friends at the Tabernacle expressed most fully what was in the dear Pastor's heart. Shortly after he reached the South of France, he wrote thus to them:—

“I wish to thank you all most heartily for your constancy of love during four-and-thirty years of fellowship. We have been many in number, but only one in heart, all through these years. Specially is this true in the present hour of controversy, for my heartiest sympathizers are in my own church. Several enthusiastic ones proposed a general meeting of church-members, to express their fervent agreement with their Pastor; but the ever-faithful deacons and elders had taken time by the forelock, and presented to me a letter signed by them all as representing their brethren and sisters. Such unity comes from the grace of God, proves that His blessing is now with us, and prophesies future happiness. What can I do but thank you all, love you in return, labor for you as long as strength remains, and pray for you till I die? The infinite blessing of the Eternal God be with you for ever!”

In reply to the letter from the church-officers, and to a further communication sent by them, the Pastor wrote:—

“Mentone,
“Nov. 27, 1887.

“To the Co-Pastor and the Deacons,
“My Own Dear Brethren,

“I am touched by your loving letter. It is just like you; but it is so tenderly, so considerately done, that it has a peculiar sweetness about it. May the Lord deal with each one of you as you have dealt towards me, even in tender love and true faithfulness!

“The more you know of this Controversy, the more will your judgments, as well as your hearts, go with me. It is not possible for me to communicate to anyone all that has passed under my knowledge; but I have had abundant reason for every step I have taken, as the day of days will reveal. All over the various churches there is the same evil, in all denominations in measure; and from believers, in all quarters, comes the same thankful expression of delight that the schemes of errorists have been defeated by pouring light upon them.

“I cannot, at this present, tell you what spite has been used against me, or you would wonder indeed; but the love of God first, and your love next, are my comfort and stay. We may, perhaps, be made to feel some of the brunt of the battle in our various funds; but the Lord liveth. My eminent predecessor, Dr. Gill, was told, by a certain member of his congregation who ought to have known better, that, if he published his book, *The Cause of God and Truth*, he would lose some of his best friends, and that his income would fall off. The doctor said, ‘I can afford to be poor, but I cannot afford to injure my conscience;’ and he has left his mantle as well as his chair in our vestry.

“I should like to see you all walk in here, and to hear your loving voices in prayer, for I feel knit to you all more and more.

“Yours for ever,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

Among the letters written by Mr. Spurgeon, at that period, is one that is of special and permanent importance, first, because it was the reply to a kind communication from Dr. Culross, the President of the Baptist Union; and, next, because it sets forth so clearly the reason for Mr. Spurgeon’s protest and action:—

“Mentone,
“Nov. 26, 1887.

“My Dear Dr. Culross,

“I think it most kind of you to write me. Your brethren have usually fired at me through the newspapers their loving appeals and advices. Of this I do not complain; but, assuredly, yours is a way which commands an answer. Letters to the papers are literature, and may or may not be worth one’s notice; yours is a letter sent to me, and I will at least heartily thank you for it.

“Do I need to say that, with you, and such brethren as Dr. McLaren, Mr. Aldis, and Dr. Angus, I have no sort of disagreement, except that you stay in the Union and I am out of it? We shall, according to our light, labor for the same cause. We are all Christians and Baptists, and can find many ways of co-operation.

“The ‘Metropolitan men’ in London request the Union to devise some way by which I, with others, can return to it. This is very right from their point of view, but I wish you to understand, as President of the Union, that *the request is not mine*. I do not ask you to do what I am sure you cannot do. If I had thought that you could have done anything which would enable me to return if I retired, I should have asked you to do it before retiring.

“So long as an Association without a creed has no aliens in it, nobody can wish for a creed *formally*, for the spirit is there; but at a time when ‘strange children’ have entered, what is to be done? Whatever may theoretically be in your power, you *practically* have no power whatever. You will go on as you are; and, unless God’s grace calls back the wanderers, their numbers will increase, and their courage will cause them to speak out more plainly, to the sorrow of the faithful ones who shielded them in patient hope of better things.

“I have followed out our Lord’s mind as to private remonstrance by seeing Presidents and Secretary on former occasions, and I have written my remonstrances again and again without avail. I had no course but to withdraw. Surely, no sane person thinks that I should have made a tour to deal with the individual errorists. I have no jurisdiction over them, and should have been regarded as offensively intrusive if I had gone to them; and justly so. My question is with the Union, and with that alone. I have dealt with it all along.

“Your very clear declaration, that the Union could not have a creed, or, as I read it, could not declare its doctrinal views otherwise than by practicing baptism and the Lord’s supper, closes the door finally against me. Neither do I knock at that door, nor wish for another door to be made. The good men who formed the Union, I fancy, had no idea that it would become what it now is, or they would have fashioned it otherwise. It has, by its centralization and absorption of various Societies, become far other than at the first. This is a good thing, but it involves a strain on the frail fabric which it is ill adapted to bear. So I think; but time will be the best proof of *that*.

“I wish I could have worked with you in this particular way; but, as I cannot, we are not therefore deprived of a thousand other ways of fellowship. You feel union of heart with men who publicly preach Universal Restitution: *I do not*. I mean, you feel enough fellowship to remain in the Union with them: *I do not*. It is the same with other errors. Still, I am in fellowship with *you*, — Union or no Union. If I think you wrong in your course,—as I surely do,—I will tell you so in the same spirit as that in which you have written to me.

“From the Council of the Union I cannot look for anything which I should care to consider as the voice of the Union. It is too largely committed to a latitudinarian policy beforehand, and I have no question to refer to it.

“I am happily free from all responsibility for its actions, and all allegiance to its sovereignty.

“Very heartily yours,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

I have received, from many friends, copies of my dear husband’s letters written during this trying period; but I do not think any good purpose can be served by the publication of more than I have here given. Those who sympathized with him in his protest need nothing to convince them of the need and the wisdom of his action; while those who were opposed to him would probably remain in the same mind, whatever might be said, so there the matter must rest as far as I am concerned.