

# Notes (From the August 1888 Sword and Trowel)

by C.H. Spurgeon

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*C.H. Spurgeon's sermon reflects on the legacy of Joseph Tritton and addresses the critical issues surrounding the 'Down-Grade' controversy within the church.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 6:11-13, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 2:8, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 10:27, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:3

**Topics:** "Faithfulness", "Defense of the Gospel"

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## Description

C.H. Spurgeon reflects on the life and legacy of Joseph Tritton, a man of deep faith and commitment to evangelical teachings, whose hymns and service to the Baptist Missionary Society left a lasting impact. Spurgeon emphasizes Tritton's refined spirit and the importance of preserving his works as a testament to his faithfulness. He also addresses the 'Down-Grade' controversy, urging the church to hold firmly to the truth of the gospel amidst rising false teachings. Spurgeon and others express their support for the defense of scriptural truth, highlighting the need for vigilance against heresy. The sermon concludes with a call for unity among believers in standing for the faith once delivered to the saints.

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## Transcript

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.

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

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