

The Downgrade Controversy

March, 1887

Charles Spurgeon

- In 2nd – 3rd generations, hundreds of churches in England drifted from 'sound doctrine' into . . .
 - Socinianism
 - Skepticism
 - Darwinism

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Socinianism

- Faustus Socinus (d. 1604); Fausto
- Rejects pre-existence of Christ
- He began existence at conception
- Son of Joseph. Merely human (Arianism) – (William Barclay)
- Predestination; no free will

Think Unitarianism

I. Downgrade Controversy

Began when churches elevated
worldly wisdom over spiritual

- Many church leaders held truth but would not fight for it (Jd.3)
- In few decades, fervor turned to dry, listless, and apostate teaching.
Ho.4:9
- C. Darwin: first introduced to skepticism by 'pastor' enthralled with Socinianism

Began when churches elevated worldly wisdom over spiritual

- Only churches that thrived: those that kept fighting for 'the faith.'
- Character of downgrade agitators: lost faith in divine inspiration of Scripture. [2 Tim.3; 2 Pt.1]
- Amusements substituted for gospel preaching.
- Andover Theological Seminary (NY)

I. Downgrade Controversy

II. Digressive Concessions

1. The world

- Mt.4:8-9, Jesus knew its dangers
- Mk.16:15, world needs gospel
- Jn.1:10; 3:19, does not give up
- Jn.15:18-19, hatred (16:8)
- 2 Pt.1:4 (2:20)
- 1 Jn.4:3-4

2. The age

- “Age”: a period marked by spiritual or moral characteristics
- 1 Co.1:19 (Is.29:14)
- 1 Co.1:20 (Is.33:18)
 - Assyria attacks Jerusalem.
 - Wise men / scribes count profits.

NT:

Wise

Scribe

Disputer

2. The age

- “Age”: a period marked by spiritual or moral characteristics
- 1 Co.1:19 (Is.29:14)
- 1 Co.1:20 (Is.33:18)
- 1 Co.3:18

World: God’s people are “fools”

1 Co.2:6-8, not so wise

Satan’s arsenal – not one battle

3. The 'science'

- 1 Tim.6:20-21

²⁰O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is **falsely called** knowledge—²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

Falsely named: pseudonym

3. The 'science'

- Modern 'science' is idolatry: the God and Bible of many
- No one has right to believe as he likes
- ...or choose what he wants to preach, Ro.1:16
- Some believe in the charity of uncertainty. Ga.5:11; 1 Pt.2:8
- 'Large-hearted' toward false doctrine...
- We can 'know' truth: Jn.8; 17; 2 Tim.1

4. The war

- Called to . . .
 - Defense of gospel
 - Conquest
- Be strong, stand, Ep.6
 - 1 Tim.1:18, wage good warfare
 - 1 Tim.6:
 - 11: flee temptation
 - 12: fight attacks against faith
 - 2 Tim.2:4, not entangled

5. The ears

- 2 Tim.4:2-5

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ – Gal.6:12

So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life” – Job 2:4

The method

- Fathers can learn what to avoid by watching worldly dads
- Christians learn consequences of sin by watching effects on worldly people
- Jesus expected disciples to learn . . .
 - Truth from His teaching
 - Errors to avoid by unapproved examples – Mt.16; 23; 1 Co.10
- We learn from Downgrade... Col.2:8