A Plea for Doctrinal Purity

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There was never a more devilish doctrine than that doctrinal purity is unimportant. None can read the New Testament with an unbiased eye and keep from seeing this emphasis. It begins with such representative statements from the Christ as, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples," (John 8:31) and does not end until the final words of the Sacred volume (Rev. 22:18–19). No New Testament author neglects this emphasis.

The motive of this strong and consistent theme is the Truth that the Word of God, through His Son, is God's spiritual "Seed" (Luke 8:11). If the Seed is faithfully preserved and planted, it can produce nought, but the plant imprinted by God on its spiritual DNA (Gal. 6:7). Moreover, when the Seed germinates and produces God's plant, that spiritual plant—the church—can remain pure, healthy, and strong only so long as it feeds upon the pure food of the Gospel. *Apostasy* cannot be defined apart from doctrinal corruption.

When one or one hundred saints move away from Christ it is because they have embraced a different, perverted "gospel" (Gal. 1:6–7). The reason why any congregation today is different from what it faithfully was even one generation ago is that the doctrine has been changed and corrupted. The two—the **doctrine** and the **church**—are inseparably linked. When the doctrine is changed, a vicious cycle, almost incapable of being interrupted, is set in motion. Change of doctrine creates change in the church—its work and worship. And the more the church changes, the more true doctrine is despised, causing yet further digressions in the church.

This is why the inspired men were so boldly militant in the preservation of Divine Truth. As they were, so must we be—set for the defence of the Gospel, being ready always to give answer for our hope, and contending earnestly for the Faith (Phi. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). This is precisely why Paul made his powerful appeal on this theme to the saints at Rome: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17).

No better illustration can be found of the consequences of ignoring this appeal than the total apostasy of the church at Rome. The Roman congregation remained its identity as a church of Christ (Rom. 1:16) only so long as she faithfully preached and practiced apostolic doctrine. When tolerance of false doctrine and its teachers began to prevail, the loss of her Scriptural identity was sealed—the seed was corrupted. Over a span of the next few centuries, it developed into the religio-politico monstrosity known as the Roman Catholic Church. **Will we learn the lessons of history**?

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