

Jude 1-3
 2 Tim 1:13, Titus 1:9, Heb 10:23
 Jul 13:15 7

D. The Quest for Doctrinal Purity

1. Introducing the subject.

Doctrinal purity is the concept of teaching truth as it is given in the Word of God. It seeks to display and defend the matters taught in the Bible. Since all teaching is accompanied by some opinion, some ideas, some material less relevant it is always possible to inject something that will cloud the truth! It is something for which we work and pray...that we will be faithful to the revealed truth given us in the Word of God.

Our quest begins in 1 Timothy 4¹⁴ and finds a sticker point in 1 Corinthians 16:22. Most polemical discussions arise out of a search for doctrinal purity (although some arise simply out of human orneriness). My discussions will generally focus on times of issues when the purity of the doctrine or life practice was thought to be (or really was) in jeopardy.

- The Novatian and Donatist schisms...the two problems were separated by about fifty years but had the same basic problem. The dispute came with the matter of dealing with persons who had denied their faith in some way to avoid persecution. The more rigid group argued that such persons could not be restored for a long time and after much penance. The softer bodies argued to receive them immediately with thanks and forget their failures. The quest for doctrinal purity and life that conformed to it brought a division in Rome (Novatianism) and later in North Africa (Donatism) The former ended in peace after the Milan Edict while the latter continued until the Muslim conquest of northern Africa.

- Following the Christological controversies and the Great Councils, the doctrinal studies declined somewhat until the scholastic movement on the 12-14th period. The nature of the atonement was a key problem and the resolution offered by Anselm eventually became the standard in the church...it is known as the vicarious theory of the atonement. The scholastic scholars spent a lot of time "splitting hairs" and while there was some genuine godliness apparent, there was a lot of arguing for argument's sake, in my opinion.

- The Reformation (1500-1600) offered a great deal of truth

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