

We struggle with an emotional foe in this area. We have a natural desire to come to dogmatic definition on all points. There are few to whom the idea of a fixed understanding on all points does not appeal (but they, for better or worse, -the few, that is, are usually the theologians and philosophers.) With rare exception, most men do not like to feel unsettled or unsure. To have a firm point and hold it tenaciously is better than having an indecisive issue where firmness cannot be manifested. So, rather than admit ignorance in even the most fickle areas, teachers claim positions of exactness in areas where their ignorance is appalling. Consequently they teach "doctrine" often undeveloped and uncomparad. So it is that the history of theology has sometimes been a history of popular pretensions.

What we need in this study is a spirit of inquiry that will be glad when finality is achieved but not feel squelched without it. To this end historical theology is a great asset: it allows us to see in the works of others the ways in which doctrinal formulations have been propounded--some--times for the blessing and benefit of all and some--times to the grief of the church. Then, if we have any sensitivity to history, it is possible we will be able to profit from that display. As historical theology becomes a study of the progress in human understanding, it becomes a devastator of the authoritarian personality. Men and women who feel keenly that the ultimate answer on every question can be quickly designated in the text in such a way as to make it binding on the consciences of all other believers,..., usually drop the course.

By this very nature, this should be clear to us. Doctrinal diversity is not going to be solved in history. This course is not so intended. It will not show what is more or less historical but will simply try to show the expressions of the ideas and the settings that gave rise to them. It will not solve all the problems theologically and should not give you a new set of epithets to try on your friends who are in a different doctrinal circle. It should produce an humbling effect as we all study in our limited historical perspective.

#### Heretics and Heresy in the Doctrine/Development

Finally, a word for heretics. It is humorously said that if there were no heretics, there would be no orthodox. There is some truth in that for if there had never been false teachers there would be no criterion for determining true teachers. The Word, not history, determines heresy. But the diversionary teachers have contributed a lot, albeit indirectly. While we may not be thankful for them, a lot of creeds would never have been written without them.