

history and look at the Scriptures in a total structural form, we would be able to see all the doctrines in Biblical perspective. Since we cannot do this we are compelled to see them emerge in historical perspective with what, at times, may seem like change in the essential character... but which closer examination will reveal to be change in the vehicle.

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. With rare exception, most persons do not like to feel unsettled or insecure. To have a firm point and hold it tenaciously is better than having an indecisive issue where firmness cannot be manifested. Feeling this way many persons, rather than admit ignorance or an incompleteness of material in even the most doubtful areas, claim positions of exactness in all things! Consequently they teach "doctrine" often undeveloped and uncomparated. Thus the history of theology and doctrine may sometimes appear to be more a history of un-scholarly pretension.

Therefore what is needed in this study is a spirit of inquiry that will be glad when finality is achieved but will 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 doctrinal formulations have been propounded, sometimes for blessing and benefit of all and occasionally to the grief of the church on the other hand. There, 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 assigned 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 intended to do so. 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.

Finally, a word for heretics and heresy in this discussion of doctrine and change. 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 been no false teachers there would be no criterion (a) for determining true teachers. The Word, not history, determines heresy. But the diversionary teachers have contributed a lot, albeing indirectly. While we