



The Church: Guardian of the Truth

How important is truth? It seemed that after the tragedy of September 11th, America had rediscovered the existence of absolute right and wrong and thus absolute truth. But it now seems that as the remains of the World Trade Center have been gathered up and trucked out of Manhattan, so has this newfound understanding been removed from the mind of many Americans. The mantra that "Truth is relative" or "That is truth for you, but not for me" echoes in our ears. Truth is again declared to be a human construct, based upon personal or corporate opinion rather than as an absolute that exists apart from the mind of man. This type of thinking will ultimately lead to the utter devaluation of all truth and would answer our initial question that truth is only important as long as I find it useful. It is a tool to be used and discarded as the occasion demands. But is this the correct answer? Fortunately for us there is another answer not grounded in the shifting opinions of man, but in the ultimate source of truth himself, namely the Lord God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. He has graciously provided a depository of objective truth in His revealed word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. We must turn to Him and this revelation to find the correct answer to our question.

Scripture records that our understanding of truth must begin with God himself. He is not only the author of truth, "*Thy word is truth,*" (John 17:17) but He is truth personified (John 14:6). The late Professor Louis Berkhof wrote the following as he was considering the Scriptural terms for truth and their application to God:

"When God is called the truth, this is to be understood in its most comprehensive sense. He is the truth first of all in a metaphysical sense, that is, in Him the idea of the Godhead is perfectly realized; He is all that He as God should be, and as such is distinguished from all so-called gods, which are called vanity and lies, Psalm 96:5; 97:7; 115:4-8; Isaiah 44:9,10. He is also the truth in an ethical sense, and as such reveals Himself as He really is, so that His revelation is absolutely reliable. Numbers 23:19; Romans 3:4; Hebrews 6:18. Finally, He is also the truth in a logical sense, and in virtue of this He knows things as they really are, and has so constituted the mind of man that the latter can know, not merely the appearance, but also the reality, of things. Thus the truth of God is the foundation of all knowledge."¹

Because this is so: "*He is the source of all truth, not only in the sphere of morals and religion, but also in every field of scientific endeavor.*"²

Truth is not only important to God, but it is important and indeed essential to us. Our salvation is founded upon the veracity of the Gospel proclaimed to us. Not in vain does the Heidelberg Catechism answer the question

"What is true faith?" with "It is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also a hearty trust..."³

Furthermore, not only our eternal destiny, but even our daily lives here on earth are dependent upon truth. Consider for a moment the importance of truth in the areas of applied science (technology); social interactions (family, church and state); business (especially in light of the recent corporate scandals and the cry for truthfulness in reporting); etc. Even if many deny truth's importance, much of life is based upon the firm foundation of truth.

Who had God called to be guardians of truth?

Since God's revelation is truth and man's very existence and life are contingent upon truth, another question must be raised at this point. Since truth is critically important, into whose hands has God entrusted the protection and promotion of truth? But before we attempt to answer this question, it is necessary to understand what is entailed in this responsibility. The guarding of the truth can be viewed from two different angles or aspects. The first is positive, the proclamation or promotion of the truth. The second is negative, the confronting and overturning of error. But that is not all. As the title of Richard Weaver's book *Ideas Have Consequences* suggests, what we hold as truth not only affects our thinking but our very lives. So each of the above-mentioned aspects must include both a knowledge or cognitive sense and also a practical, applicatory sense. We must not only know and proclaim the truth, but we must also apply the truth to our own and our listener's lives. We must not only confront erroneous thinking, but we must also confront the evil fruit that such thinking produces. Our preaching, teaching, exhortation, counseling, apologetics — whatever the Lord calls us to do in regard to the truth must include the focus on both: word and deed, doctrine and praxis.

With this in mind, let us attempt to answer our second question, namely to whom has God entrusted the protection and promotion of truth? It is our contention based upon Scripture that the primary agent to whom God has entrusted the vital task of guarding the truth is the covenant people of God, or the visible, corporate church. To support this thesis our overall approach will be to first survey the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament to establish its biblical basis. Next, we will briefly survey church history, paying particular attention to how the church understood and carried out this task, specifically in her formulation of creeds and confessions. Finally, we will apply what we have learned to a present day situation, in particular the claims of Mr. Harold Camping, president of Family Radio. His recent teaching includes the assertion that God has declared that the visible church is dead, that its officers have no spiritual authority and should repudiate their offices, and that the Holy Spirit has left what remains of the church in the hands of Satan.

The Old Testament people of God as guardians of truth

Turning now to the early chapters of Genesis, we discover that God entrusted His Holy Word to Adam from the very start (Genesis 1:28-30). He also called him to guard the garden, the meeting place of God and man (Genesis 2:15). Unfortunately, Adam failed in both of these responsibilities. He neither upheld God's word as true nor confronted the error that Satan had introduced into the garden. In addition, Adam did not practice the truth but believed and followed the lie (Genesis 3:1-6). Needless to say, the result were disastrous. Notice, however, that God did not forsake Adam; instead He further declared and entrusted His word of promise to him and expected him to rely upon it (Genesis 3:8f). We learn from this incident that God's revelation of truth brought with it the responsibility to guard and promote it.⁴ As we continue on our journey through the book of Genesis, we encounter the patriarch Noah. He not only received and guarded God's word, but obeyed it to the saving of his household (Hebrews 11:7). He was declared by the Apostle Peter as "*a preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 3:20).⁵ Still later, we encounter another man of God, the patriarch Abraham. God greatly honored him by not only giving him great and precious promises and the grace of faith to believe in them (Genesis 15:6), but also by designating him as a prophet (Genesis 20:7) and one who obeyed God's voice and "*kept his charge, commandments, statutes and laws*" (Genesis 26:5).⁶

God's calling not only included covenant heads such as Adam, Noah and Abraham; but also the covenant people of God as a whole. Moses was not only called by God to lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt (Exodus 3:10), but also to deliver His word to Israel for safekeeping (Exodus 24:4; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9). As we noted earlier, this task of safekeeping (guarding) included knowing God's word as well as putting it into practice. Israelite parents were commanded to know and teach it to their children throughout the day (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The Levites and priests were to teach it to the people (Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 33:10). The elders of the people were to render just judgment according to it (Exodus 18:20-22; Deuteronomy 1:13-18). The king that would arise at a later time was commanded to personally copy it and meditate

upon it (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). In other words, all aspects of the lives of the covenant people of God were to be informed by it. It was their glory and crown in the sight of all the nations (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). The Apostle Paul summarized this duty in his epistles to the Romans when he declared that *"unto them were committed the oracles of God"* (Romans 3:2).

Furthermore, not only were the Old Testament people of God responsible to know and do God's word of truth, but they were also called to confront error in doctrine and life both within the covenant community and without. For example, the people were required to evaluate any prophet that came upon the scene based upon the clear instruction found in the Law of God (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:22). They were also not to learn the religious beliefs of those who dwelt in the land of Canaan, nor follow their practices (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). They were called to be a holy people, set apart for God's purposes, directed by His law, for His glory and praise. In summary, the Old Testament people of God were called to positively and negatively guard His word by knowledge and by life.

The New Testament people of God as guardians of truth

As we now turn our attention to the New Testament, we again encounter a variety of individuals who were called to guard God's truth. The premier example is that of our Lord Jesus Christ. He not only knew the word of God, He was the Word made flesh (John 1:1-14). His earthly ministry included the proclamation of the truth and the fulfillment of all the just demands of the Law as well as the confrontation of the erroneous teaching and practices of many of His contemporaries. We could profitably spend much time considering this aspect of His life and ministry, but for the purposes of this article, we must focus our attention on those for whom Christ came to redeem and call to discipleship, namely the church. Throughout his public ministry our Lord Jesus ministered unto the multitudes, but the main focal point of His attention and effort was the preparation of a small band of handpicked-followers who would carry on the mission. These followers, who are called apostles,⁷ were set apart as His representatives and heralds of the truth of the Gospel.

They were commissioned to go and "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"

(Matthew 28:19-20)

He promised to send to them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who would cause them to remember His words and who would guide them into all truth (John 14:16-17, 26).

The Book of Acts provides an abundance of examples of the Holy Spirit's guiding of the church into all truth and away from error, especially through Christ's commissioned representative. For example, on the day of Pentecost, we observe the apostle Peter standing up with the eleven (Acts 2:14), answering the questions of the crowd that had gathered, proclaiming the truth of the Gospel and calling them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38); in other words, to become Christ's disciples, members of the church. Later, when arrested by the leaders of the Jews and forbidden to preach the Gospel, the apostles responded

"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

(Acts 4:19-20)

After they were released, the apostles prayed *"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word"* (Acts 4:29). The Lord Jesus answered their prayer and granted them great boldness to preach and to confront the errors of their time. This included confronting lies and deception within the church as well. It should not come as a surprise that the next incident recorded by Luke is that of judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:11).⁸

Though the apostle Peter functions as the main spokesman or chief representative of the church in these accounts, Scripture records that there were many others who fulfilled Christ's discipleship

mandate. For example, during the General Council or Synod at Jerusalem recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, an elder of the Jerusalem church, whose name was James, gave the final word and drafted the doctrinal and practical response to the churches concerning the issue of Gentile believers that had been brought to the council. Later, in his epistle (the book of James), he both instructed believers in the truth as well as confronted various errors in doctrine and life. Consider further the apostle John. He was known in the early church as *"the beloved disciple or the disciple whom Jesus loved"* and later designated *"the apostle of love."* But he could just as easily been called "the apostle of truth." It is through the Gospel that bears his name that we previously learned that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, that Christ himself claims to be the truth (John 14:6), and promised the church that

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

(John 8:31-32)

Moreover, a major concern in all three of John's epistles is that of truth, especially Second and Third John.⁹ Finally, who could ignore Jude, the Lord's brother, who in his epistle exhorted the church *"to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3). His exhortation seems to have been necessitated by the many errors that were plaguing the church (see verses 4-19). Last, but not least, in our survey of Christ's heralds and foundations of the church (Ephesians 2:20) is the apostle Paul. Since the example of his life and his specific teachings concerning God's calling upon the church as guardian of the truth play such a crucial role in the life of the first century church and beyond.

To summarize, what we have learned thus far is that God is greatly concerned about truth and has ordained the visible, corporate church in general, and His commissioned and gifted representatives specifically, to proclaim and live the truth and to confront and reprove error in its many forms. The church, through her officers, must continue to carry out this divine task of guarding the truth and will continue to do so until Christ himself returns from heaven to judge the living and the dead.

Captured and commissioned to serve the truth

We will begin where the Scriptures first introduce us to Paul, not as the great apostle, but as Saul of Tarsus, persecutor and enemy of the church. Turning to the end of the seventh chapter of Acts, we meet Saul at the trial of Stephen, the first martyr of the New Testament Church. Saul not only assisted in the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58), but he was emboldened to zealously wreck havoc on the church,

"entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."

(Acts 8:3),

and, *"breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."*

(Acts 9:1-2)

The apostle later reflected upon the intensity of this zeal when he stated in his letter to the Galatians; *"how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it"* (Galatians 1:13). Furthermore, he declared near the end of his life that he was *"the chief of sinners"* because he attacked the Church while she was in her infancy (1 Timothy 1:13-15). Yet, according to God's predetermined plan and purpose, this great persecutor of the church would become one of her greatest defenders.

At the very height of Saul's rage against the church, a rage that oddly enough was incited by a desire to defend the truth as he understood it, our Lord Jesus Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus and enlightened him concerning his great error. This encounter with the risen Christ had such an impact upon his life that he returned to it numerous times both as a comfort and as a confirmation of his calling. Besides the actual event recorded in chapter 9, Luke recorded two other times that Saul, who later took the name Paul, recounted this event and especially the words of

Christ. Because they bear directly upon our study of Saul, we must take a moment and review all three of them now.

Our Lord Jesus sent His disciple Ananias to Saul to restore his sight that was taken from him during the confrontation on the road. In the process, He declared that Saul was *"a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"* (Acts 9:15-16). This calling was fulfilled in the subsequent life and ministry of the Apostle, especially the aspect of suffering for Christ's name. As a matter of fact, Paul referred to this suffering as one of the distinguishing marks of an apostle.¹⁰ Next, his experience was recounted during his defense before the angry mob at the temple in Jerusalem. Using the words of Ananias, Paul declared that he was called to be Christ's *"witness to all men of what you have seen and heard"* (Acts 22:15). Notice that this calling as witness¹¹ to all men included the Gentiles, and when Paul explained this to the crowd, they became further agitated and cried out for his execution. Finally, during his defense before King Agrippa, Paul quoted the full account of Christ's call to him;

*"rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a **minister and a witness** both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."*

(Acts 26:16-18)

It is important to consider at this point the dual role of minister and witness. A witness is one who speaks concerning the things he knows and the primary meaning of the word translated 'minister' is *"one who acts under the orders of another to carry out his will."*¹² In other words, he is an authorized representative.

That Paul understood the function of these two terms is evident in his use of the titles 'apostle' and 'servant of Jesus Christ' in the majority of his epistle. To summarize, Paul was commissioned by the risen Savior to bear witness to His name (person and works) by word and deed.

Carrying out His commission to promote and guard the truth

After many years of preparation in his home town of Tarsus, the Lord, through Barnabas, brought Paul to serve the newly established church in Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:25-26). Paul and Barnabas were numbered among the prophets and teachers of the church when the Holy Spirit directed the church leaders to *"Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"* (Acts 13:2). Thus began Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, a journey full of many perils and great success, Through it all, *"the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region (of Galatia)"* (Acts 13:49).

But not only did Paul and Barnabas proclaim and teach the truth of the Gospel, they also confronted error in its many forms such as the words of the false prophet Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:60 or the words of the Jews who rejected the Gospel and stirred up persecution (Acts 13:45, 50; 14:5, 19). It was during this time that Paul declared that he had reached a major turning point in his ministry, specifically that the Gentiles would be the primary focus of his attention and work (Acts 13:46-47). But unfortunately, even among these people, he faced great challenges due to their many errors in thought and life (Acts 14:18).

Not soon after his return to Antioch from the regions of Galatia, Paul was embroiled in a controversy with the Judaizers, those who demanded that the Gentile believers must be circumcised in order to be considered part of the covenant people of God. He was one of those who opposed this error and was asked to convey this dispute to the first synod of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15). Guided to some degree by the testimony of God's work through Paul's ministry and that of the Apostle Peter, the church established a directive for the Gentile churches to follow. Soon after the Synod had concluded, we find Paul embarking upon a journey to confirm the newly established Gentile churches in the truth secured at the Synod. It was on this journey that the truth of the Gospel was spread into Macedonia and Greece. Paul utilized various opportunities

to preach and teach prayer meetings (Acts 16:13), a jail and the jailer's house in Philippi (Acts 16:25-32), synagogues (Acts 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4), market places (Acts 17:17), and even the Areopagus of Athens (Acts 17:19f). He also confronted error when it reared its ugly head.¹³ Paul even spent a year and a half (an unusually long time for him to stay in one place) in the wicked city of Corinth, in order to establish and strengthen that church in the truth of the Gospel.

Paul's third missionary journey was also filled with the same two-fold work of the proclamation of truth and the confrontation of error. The major difference of this journey as compared to the first two is that he spent most of his time in the city of Ephesus (a strategic center of outreach to Asia Minor). Luke summarized the success of this ministry thus, "*So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed*" (Acts 19:20). During this time we also find Paul effectively utilizing the gifts and calling of other servants of Christ to minister to the churches, both in Ephesus and beyond (Acts 19:22).¹⁴

At the same time, due to his great love and concern for the larger church, he personally revisited the churches in Macedonia and Greece, exhorting and strengthening them in the faith (Acts 19:20; 20:11). At the end of his time in Asia, Paul called the elders of the church together, summarized the extent of his ministry among them, and charged them to fulfill their responsibility to promote and guard the truth with these words:

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

(Acts 20:28-32)

Although the Lord greatly used the apostle's physical presence to establish and strengthen the church, Paul's most enduring legacy, which continues to guide the church throughout the millennia, are his letters recorded in the New Testament. It is interesting to note that even while the New Testament was still being written, these epistles were already recognized as Holy Scripture.¹⁵ Paul's epistles to the church can be divided into three groups based upon our two-fold premise. First, there are those that are primarily written as a straightforward presentation of truth. Although in the process many errors are overturned, yet Paul's main concern is positive proclamation rather than negative confrontation. These would include his letters to the churches in Rome, Ephesus, and Colosse.¹⁶ On the other side of the spectrum are his letter to the Galatians as well as both letters to the church in Corinth. In these, Paul addressed diverse errors in theology or practice.¹⁷ The rest of his letters to the churches consist of a mixture of these two aspects.¹⁸ To summarize, in order to promote and protect His truth, our Lord chose to use men like Paul, authorized them to be His representatives (apostles), and communicated His truth through their lives and through their spoken and written word. They were given to the church (Ephesians 4:11) to function as her foundation, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

Furthermore, the apostle Paul wrote important letters to individuals such as Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.¹⁹ Paul had sent two of these men to serve the churches of Asia Minor (Timothy) and the island of Crete (Titus). Due to the nature of the situations that these two men faced, Paul provided valuable guidance and instruction that not only assisted the churches of that era, but throughout the subsequent life and ministry of the church. In next month's article, Lord willing, we will concentrate our attention on specific portions of these letters that address the ongoing responsibility of the church to guard and promote the truth.

Committing the task to faithful men, able to teach others

Due to the effects of sin,²⁰ one of the most important aspects of guarding the truth is the raising up of others to bear this responsibility (especially the next generation). The Apostle Paul, like the Lord

Jesus before him,²¹ clearly understood this necessity. This is especially evident in his letters to Timothy and Titus, traditionally called the Pastoral Epistles. These letters were written in the last years of Paul's life and were primarily intended to guide and encourage these men in their ministry to the churches of Asia Minor (Timothy) and the island of Crete (Titus). In the process, Paul left specific instruction to the generations who would follow concerning how to carry out their calling with reference to the truth. We will consider these instructions as they appear in each letter.

1. Timothy: training the next generation to promote and guard the truth

Contrary to the assertion of some that Paul would not begin his letter to his "son" Timothy with such official language as *"an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,"*²² we would argue that this statement is consistent with his other letters, both to individuals and to churches.²³ Furthermore, it reveals Paul's self-conscious understanding of his office and authority as one called and sent by God to promote and guard the truth.²⁴ This is evident in statements such as *"according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry"*²⁵ and *"for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle – I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying – a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."*²⁶ Notice that the phrases *"putting me into the ministry"* and *"appointed"*²⁷ denote God's sovereign calling, and the phrase *"enabled me"* speaks of the God-given ability to fulfill that calling. He was not only called to the office of apostle, but that he must preach and teach that which was committed to his trust (i.e. *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*). It was on the basis of this authority that Paul wrote this letter in the first place.

Not only Paul, but Timothy as well, had been called and authorized to proclaim and guard the truth. Paul understood and acknowledged this point in a number of ways throughout his letter. As a matter of fact, the church in general and the Reformed church in particular, has been guided by these elements in the examination and ordination of ministers ever since. They include:

- 1) The testimony of a good profession of faith before many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12). Before a candidate is taken under care of Classis, his church, through the Consistory, must certify his profession of faith and godly life as well as his giftedness for the ministry.
- 2) The testing and validation of the candidate's theological and practical knowledge of the Scriptures and the doctrines contained therein (1 Timothy 4:6-16). Classis examines the candidate in a number of areas of doctrine and life to ascertain the candidate's fitness for ministry.
- 3) The formal ordination including the charge given to the minister (1 Timothy 1:18) and the symbolic transfer of authority through the laying on of hands by the Presbytery (i.e. Elders, see 1 Timothy 4:14).

Though Paul understood Timothy's position and authority in the church, through this letter he continued to direct and instruct Timothy concerning his responsibility to confront and overturn false teaching (chapters 1, 4, and 6) as well as the positive proclamation of the truth in doctrine and in life (the rest of the letter). In essence, through this letter, he passes on his authority to Timothy and to those who serve the church with him, (i.e. the overseers/elders and deacons – see chapter 3). One term in particular that Paul used to communicate this act of transfer was the term translated "charge."²⁸ He used it in direct reference to Timothy (1:18; 6:13) as well as concerning what Timothy should do in regards to others (1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:17). Even the very ending of the letter contains a charge *"O Timothy! **Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.**"*²⁹ This letter, therefore, could be viewed as the preparation for the passing on of the baton of authority to the next generation of the church.

This letter contains one particular passage that clearly teaches that the church is God's primary means of promoting and protecting the truth. Unfortunately, it has been misinterpreted by those who would deny that this responsibility continues in the visible church. The passage is found in chapter 3 and follows the qualification for the offices of overseer/elder and deacon. Paul expected to return to Ephesus in the near future but in case he was delayed, he wrote; *"if I am delayed, I*

*write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*¹⁸⁰

Mr. Harold Camping has taught³¹ that the phrase, *"the pillar and ground of the truth,"* cannot be applied to the church because it would then contradict Ephesians 2:20 in which Paul declared that the church is *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."* He argues that instead of the organized, visible church, it is God Himself who is the pillar and ground of the truth. Thus this passage does not speak to the continuing necessity and responsibility of the church to promote and guard the truth. But is this interpretation correct? We would strongly disagree with this attempt to undermine the real intent of this passage.

First, the overall context of this passage is the establishing of church officers (3:1-13) and includes a summary of the truth in what some understand as an early creedal statement (3:16). Immediately following we find a warning against false teaching that will arise *"in the latter times"* (4:1-3). Paul's statement that the church is *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* is consistent with both the immediate as well as the overall context. Second, the passage under consideration is a directive to Timothy that he would *"conduct himself"*¹⁸² properly *"in the house of God"*. The rest of the verse does not stand on its own, but is a support or an expansion on this phrase. If it be argued that the terms *"pillar"* and *"ground"* are not the same gender in the Greek as the term *"church"* and that therefore they do not modify it, we must again point out that the controlling phrase is *"the house of God"* and not *"the church of the living God"* and the gender of the term *"house"* is in agreement with at least one of these modifiers.³³ If it be argued on theological grounds that the term *"ground"* cannot be applied to the church, we must bear in mind that this word is only found in this verse in the New Testament and rarely elsewhere. Whatever English gloss or nuances we use, it should not be used as the sole basis of our understanding of the entire phrase or verse. The Greek word *hedraioma* translated *"ground"* could, according to Friberg's Lexicon, just as well be translated *"mainstay"* or *"support."* Furthermore, Dr. Kelly in his commentary of the Pastoral Epistles translates this word as *"buttress."* He writes:

*"What Paul is saying is that it is the function and responsibility of each congregation to support, bolster up, and thus safeguard the true teaching by its continuous witness. We should note (a) that buttress is probably a more accurate rendering of the Greek hedraioma (found nowhere else) than 'foundation' or 'ground' (AV), and (b) that the local church is described as a pillar etc., not 'the pillar, etc.', because there are many local churches throughout the world performing this role"*¹⁸⁴

He later added; *"Paul's sole concern is to emphasize that the members of each local community should be a strong bulwark of the gospel against the assaults of false teachers."*¹⁸⁵ The use of the term *"buttress"* or *"bulwark"*¹⁸⁶ alleviates the concern stated earlier and further is consistent with the context. In essence, Paul states that the church, founded firmly on the Word of God (Ephesians 2:20) functions as a pillar (something that promotes or lifts up for all the world to see) and a bulwark of (something that supports, guards, and protects) the truth. Third, note well Dr. Kelly's insight concerning the lack of the definite article before both *"pillar"* and *"bulwark."* This lack creates a greater problem for those who would argue that these modifiers refer to *"the living God,"* for Paul would then be saying that God is *"a pillar and a bulwark,"* not *"the pillar and the bulwark."* On the other hand, no difficulty arises if Paul is simply referring to the church. To bring the discussion of verse 15 to a close, it would be beneficial to consider Calvin's comments on this verse:

*"The reason why the Church is called the "pillar of truth" is, that she defends and spreads it by her agency. God does not himself come down from heaven to us, nor does he daily send angels to make known his truth; but he employs pastors, whom he had appointed for that purpose ... For the same reason, also, she is called "the pillar of truth;" because the office of administering doctrine, which God hath placed in her hands, is the only instrument of preserving the truth, that it may not perish from the remembrance of men. Consequently this commendation relates to the ministry of the word; for if that be removed, the truth of God will fall to the ground... Accordingly in reference to men, the Church maintains the truth, because by preaching the Church proclaims it, because she keeps it pure and entire, because she transmits it to posterity."*¹⁸⁷

To summarize thus far, we must remember that one of the main reasons Paul wrote this letter was his concern for false teaching that had arisen and would arise in the future. This was the reason he left Timothy in Ephesus (1:3). This was the reason for his charge to Timothy that *"you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck."*⁶⁸ This was also the reason for establishing officers in the church because false teaching would arise *"in the latter times."*⁶⁹ Praise be to God that He has called and equipped the visible, organized church to promote and defend the truth against all enemies, within and without the church!

2. Titus: ordaining elders in a missionary setting to promote and guard the truth

Turning now to Paul's letter to Titus, we are confronted with a different situation from that faced by Timothy in Ephesus. Paul left Titus among the newly established churches on the island of Crete to *"set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you."*⁴⁰ He wrote this letter due to this missionary setting and the need of transformation in the lives of the Cretan believers. Note again Paul's opening greeting and in particular his reference to his calling and authority. He refers to himself as a *"a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ"* (1:1) and that the gospel *"was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior"* (1:3). Based upon this delegated authority from Jesus Christ, Paul reminded Titus that he (Titus) also was empowered or authorized to *"set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city."* Paul's authority, received from Christ, had been delegated to Titus, who in turn was directed to authorize elders in every city.

In relation to what we have considered previously, note also the reason Paul gives for ordaining elders. After presenting a number of qualifications that are mainly concerned with the character and virtues of a godly life, Paul adds *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict"* (1:9). The elders must hold fast the faithful word according to the teaching which was taught by Christ and the apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:15) in order that they may be able (2 Timothy 3:15-17) to exhort and convince (reprove or rebuke (v.13)) those who speak against sound doctrine. George Knight does an excellent job of summarizing the qualifications and their purpose in verses 6 through 9 thus:

*"vv. 6-9 have presented the qualifications for an elder/overseer, God's steward. Such a person must be above reproach in his Christian life in general and in these special qualifications. His family life must demonstrate his fidelity and leadership ability (v. 6). He must not be controlled by any of the besetting sins of self (v. 7). He must love both people and goodness and must be thoughtful and prudent, obedient to God's law, seeking to please God, and self-controlled because he himself is controlled by God (v. 8). He must know and be zealously committed to the apostolic teaching and willing to teach it and to rebuke those who oppose it (v. 9). This last responsibility, especially that of rebuking those who "speak against," leads immediately into the next section and indicates the practical and necessary value of such leaders to the health and welfare of the congregation."*⁴¹

There are many other aspects of this letter that we could mention, but we must now turn our attention to the final letter of the Pastoral Epistles and probably Paul's last letter recorded in the New Testament, Second Timothy.

3. Timothy: passing on the baton of authority to the next generation

As we examine this letter, we encounter the fact that Paul believed that his time on earth was drawing to a close. This being the case, what would be the focus of his attention in his final hours? We learn that in life and in death, his single desire and focus was to glorify God by fulfilling his God-given calling. Listen to the heart of this man of God;

*"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."*⁴²

Unlike his first letter to Timothy, Paul's concern was not primarily the church that Timothy was currently serving, but with Timothy himself. Timothy, like Joshua the son of Nun before him, was facing a future without the guidance of his trusted leader. He struggled with fear and timidity, therefore Paul was quick to encourage his protégé by reminding him of the day that Timothy was set apart for the ministry (1:6-7, cf. 1 Timothy 4:14). Furthermore, again and again he exhorts Timothy to *"hold fast," "be strong in the Lord," "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," "put them in remembrance," "study to show thyself approved unto God,"* etc. In the midst of these exhortations, Paul outlined for all posterity the process of preparation of future church leaders for their responsibility to promote and guard the truth. In chapter 2, verse 2, we read; *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* Note the fourfold process;

- 1) Paul (heard from me),
- 2) Timothy (commit),
- 3) faithful men who will be able to teach, and
- 4) others also.

Finally, Paul did not forget the dangers that Timothy and the church faced. On the contrary he exhorted him to *"prepare!" "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness."*⁴³

*And "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*⁴⁴

We must not forget that these words were not written for Timothy's sake alone, but for the succeeding generations as well.

Lord Acton once declared; *"Just as the loss of memory in an individual is a psychiatric defect calling for a medical treatment, so too any community which has no social memory is suffering from an illness."*⁴⁵ Unfortunately many modern Americans in general, and evangelical Christians in particular are plagued with this lack of knowledge of history as well as a lack of desire to learn from the past. As a result, they are in danger of fulfilling the old saying that "those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." Furthermore, what one may find both interesting and disturbing is the observation that coinciding with this lack of knowledge is an attitude of superiority over the previous generations.

David Hall examined this attitude in the aptly titled book, *The Arrogance of the Modern*. In essence, he stated that we as Americans are prone to glory in our recent accomplishments and trust that the future will provide the answer to the problems and difficulties that we can't yet seem to be able to overcome. In the words of Rev. Hall, we tend to treat the past *"like a dead, therefore irrelevant, ancestor."*⁴⁶ Yet we must remember that history is ultimately *"His Story,"* the unfolding of Almighty God's sovereign decrees⁴⁷ In other words, contrary to the thinking of many Christians, the Holy Spirit has not recently awakened from an extended nap, but has been actively involved with the church and the world since their creation. In this article, we will focus our attention on the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit of promoting and guarding the truth through the means of the organized, visible church.

The truth is victorious

"Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" Referring to Jesus Christ, this dying admission of defeat by the Emperor Julian the Apostate⁴⁸ in 363 AD marked the culmination of over three centuries of warfare and the ultimate victory of Christianity over the reigning belief systems of Rome. When you stop

and consider the weak and insignificant beginnings of the church in a backwater province on the very edge of the great Roman Empire, this victory is an astonishing testimony to the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early church. The gospel had not only permeated those lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, but was impacting the lives of peoples such as the Gauls (France), Persians, and even those living as far east as India.

How was this great conquest achieved? In short, it was through the proclamation and defense of the truth of the gospel by the church. God raised up many witnesses including gifted pastors and teachers who proclaimed and defended the truth. Some even sealed their testimony with their blood (execution at the hands of the civil magistrates).⁴⁹ It was the time of the great apologists (defenders of the faith) such as Quadratus, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, whom the Lord raised up to defend the truth against attacks from within (heretics such as Marcion, Simon Magus (Gnosticism), Arius, etc.) and from without (Jews, Roman authorities, and pagan intellectuals such as Celsus). For example, Irenaeus of Lyon, against the great errors of Gnosticism, emphasized the apostolic foundations of the church and the delegated authority of Jesus Christ to those who succeeded the apostles. According to Professor Williston Walker, Irenaeus argued,

*"In these churches of apostolic foundation the apostolic teaching had been fully preserved, and its transmission had been guaranteed by the orderly succession of their bishops. Go therefore to Rome, or to Smyrna, or Ephesus, and learn what is there taught, and nothing Gnostic will be found."*⁵⁰

Furthermore, Irenaeus declared, *"Since the Apostles, like a rich man in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth."*⁵¹ This deposit was especially entrusted to *"those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth."*⁵²

Although others would later distort this point in order to elevate the bishop as superior to local pastors and elders or further to elevate the bishop of Rome (later referred to as the Pope) as the supreme authority over the church, Irenaeus was nevertheless correct in identifying that Christ had appointed and continues to provide official representatives to promote and guard the truth that He entrusted to the church. The officers of the church do exercise real God-given authority in matters of faith and life.

The Holy Spirit used not only individual church officers, however, but also the gathering of pastors and elders in what are called the early church councils. These councils developed concise statements concerning the cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures.⁵³ These statements were called creeds (derived from the Latin word CREDO or *"I believe"*). For what purpose were they written? The late Professor Paul Wooley succinctly answered this question thus:

*"The purpose of a creed is so to state truth that it will be useful in living."*⁵⁴ In his article titled *"What Is A Creed For?"* he maintained that their primary purpose was *"a positive creation designed to express the essence of the believer's faith. This was the basic origin of the creeds of both the East and West up to the fourth century."*⁵⁵

Later in the article he acknowledged that during the fourth century, due to the heresies such as that of Arius, *"the church was promulgating a creed that had as one of its major ends the defense of the church against error."*⁵⁶ Thus, these creeds were developed over time to serve as both a positive affirmation of the truth as well as a means of defending the truth from false doctrine. They assisted and continue to assist the church in her God-given task of proclaiming and defending the truth.

The truth is compromised

When we observe the early church and the great advances that she accomplished in so many areas and then consider her state just prior to the great Reformation in the sixteenth century, we might be tempted to ask, what went wrong? Or in the words of the Apostle Paul: *"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"* (Galatians 5:7). The short answer is simply that on the heels of victory came substantial compromise. For example, after the Emperor Constantine's

conversion to Christianity and his Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. that granted full freedom to Christianity, the church was overwhelmed by an influx of pagan converts. Still recovering from the effects of persecution, the failed to properly disciple these new adherents of the faith. Over time, this resulted in a compromise of the truth by the addition of pagan beliefs and practices. The church became increasingly Roman in its organization, doctrine, and practice as she continued to absorb rather than confront the Roman religious beliefs and culture.

The exaltation of the pope as the supreme ruler of the church (emulating the Roman Emperor), the addition and veneration of patron saints and Mary (remarkably similar in function to the Roman gods and goddesses) and various Roman liturgical practices are examples of this synergism. Even to this day, the Roman Catholic Church continues this practice of absorbing the culture and religious beliefs of the indigenous peoples they attempt to reach.

The most disturbing of these compromises occurred with regards to the essential elements of the faith. For example, following the teaching of the Apostles, the early church recognized not only the Old Testament as Holy Scripture that exercises binding authority upon the doctrine and practices of the church (2 Timothy 3:15-17), but the books of the New Testament as well.⁵⁷ But unfortunately, as time progressed, other oral and written traditions came to be considered of equal or even greater authority than sacred Scripture. Other compromises included the sacrifice of the Mass and the multiplication of mediators in addition to Christ, the works of man in addition to the grace of God, justification by love in addition to faith, and ultimately the glory of man as well as the glory of God. As we will discuss shortly, the Reformers of the sixteenth century were well aware of these errors and formulated what would later be termed the "Five Solas" in their attempt to restore the church to the purity that existed in her minority. Yet even in the midst of compromise, the Holy Spirit was active in keeping the church from straying too far from the truth by continually raising up shepherds to guard the flock of Christ from the ravaging jaws of the evil One.

The truth is recovered/rediscovered

How does one best describe the extraordinary restoration of biblical truth that occurred in the sixteenth century? William Cunningham, in his book *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* went so far as to assert: "The Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century was the greatest event, or series of events, that has occurred since the close of the Canon of Scripture; and the men who are really entitled to be called the 'Leaders of the Reformation' have a claim to more respect and gratitude than any other body of uninspired men that have ever influenced or adorned the church."⁵⁸ However, when these 'Leaders' contemplated what had taken place, they directed the praise and glory to God. For example, John Calvin, while discussing the reformation in Geneva, spoke thus:

*"Antichrist complains that we have fallen away from him; but we are compelled to groan that too many of the pollutions with which he has infected the whole world remain amongst us. **God has graciously restored** to us uncontaminated purity of doctrine, religion in its primitive state, the unadulterated worship of God, and a faithful administration of the Sacraments, as they were delivered to us by Christ."⁶⁹*

They practiced in life what they emphasized in their teaching, that to God alone belongs the glory (Soli Deo Gloria).⁶⁰

In many ways, the Reformation was perceived by the Roman church as radical, invasive surgery. Therefore they confronted the Reformers with questions that interestingly were asked many years before by other religious leaders who felt threatened: "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" (Matthew 21:23). In answer to their question, the Reformers pointed to the absolute authority of Holy Scripture. As we noted earlier, due to the addition of oral and written tradition, the authority of Scripture was diluted and in the end set aside in favor of more recent pronouncements from the Roman church. Although the Reformers were students of the early church fathers and greatly appreciated and quoted them in their writings, the Reformation was ultimately a "back to the Bible" movement, not only concerning content but also concerning its authority as the final determiner of truth and error. Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone)

was their watch cry heard throughout the world and in the confessions and catechisms that the Reformers and their disciples prepared in order to instruct the people, we find this principle clearly affirmed. For example, in the Belgic Confession, article 7 we read:

*"We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says. **For since it is forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God,** it does thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. **Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all;** for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore we reject with all hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule, as the apostles have taught us, saying, Prove the spirits, whether they are of God. Likewise: If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house."⁶¹*

It must be noted that contrary to the erroneous teaching of some, these confessions and catechisms were never intended to be held as equal or superior to Scripture. This line of reasoning is refuted simply by an honest perusal of these documents.

When we consider the great doctrinal discussions of the early church that resulted in the formation of the Ecumenical Creeds, the primary concern was a correct understanding of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. During the Reformation, however, the primary areas of concern were the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of lost sinners. Thus the phrases Solus Christus (Christ alone), Sola Gratia (grace alone) and Sola Fide (faith alone) were utilized by the Reformers to draw attention to the biblical foundations of these truths. The Reformers sought, through their preaching and teaching, as well as through their writings, such as the Reformed confessions and catechisms, to clearly proclaim and protect these essential doctrines of the faith.

To close this section on the Reformation, it is interesting to note that William Cunningham, in his overall evaluation of the achievements of the Reformers, also understood that the church was charged by God with a dual responsibility of promoting and guarding the truth. He wrote:

"There are two leading aspects in which the Reformation, viewed as a whole, may be regarded; the one more external and negative, and the other more intrinsic and positive. In the first aspect it was a great revolt against the see of Rome ... combined with an assertion of the exclusive authority of the Bible, and of the right of all men to examine and interpret it for themselves. In the second and more important and positive aspect, the Reformation was the proclamation and inculcation, upon the alleged authority of Scripture, of certain views in regard to the substance of Christianity or the way of salvation, and in regard to the organization and ordinances of the Christian church."⁶²

Conclusion

To summarize thus far, we have sought through this series of articles to demonstrate that God was and still is greatly concerned with truth and has ordained the visible, corporate church in general, and His commissioned and gifted representatives specifically, to proclaim and live the truth and to confront and reprove error in its many forms. As we surveyed the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, we found abundant evidence that supported this thesis. Further, when we turned to the history of the church subsequent to the closing of the canon of Scripture, we also found that the Holy Spirit has guided the church "through many dangers, toils, and snares" for almost 2,000 years. The burden of proof, and it is a heavy burden, is upon the one who argues to the contrary. What the Apostle Paul wrote concerning the visible church at Philippi also applies to the visible church as a whole, namely

"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

(Philippians 1:6)

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¹ Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, pg. 69

² Berkhof, 69

³ Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 21

⁴ Note that Heidelberg Catechism Question 54 states that the church exists "from the beginning to the end of the world" and Question 19 declares that the Holy Gospel was "first revealed in Paradise" by God Himself. Thus we understand that the church or covenant people of God existed in the Garden of Eden.

⁵ Noah functioned as the covenant head or representative of his household, which according to the Apostle Peter was "*saved by water*" (1 Peter 20-21). Thus Noah's household symbolized the existing church of that era.

⁶ Notice that the Lord declared that the reason that He knew Abraham was "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep (guard) the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment;" (Genesis 18:19)

⁷ As well as others given by Christ to the church such as prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (Ephesians 4:11)

⁸ Notice that this judgment was accomplished through Christ's representative.

⁹ A quick scan reveals 20 occurrences of the word "truth" alone.

¹⁰ "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9).

¹¹ The Greek word translated "witness" is the basis for the English word "martyr".

¹² From Timothy Friberg's *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek* He adds the following: "as those who work with Christ to accomplish his purposes *trusted servant, minister, assistant*" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

¹³ For example, see Acts 16:16-18.

¹⁴ As we will later observe, this act of preparing and sending men, following the example of the Lord Jesus, will become one of the most important ways that the church is be able to continue her responsibility of guarding and promoting the truth.

¹⁵ See 2 Peter 15-16.

¹⁶ As an example, the epistle to the Ephesians can be divided into two sections. In the first half, Paul expounds the glorious truth of the Gospel and the blessings of those who are in Christ. In the second half, beginning in chapter four, he then applies this truth to their lives, calling them to "*walk worthy of the calling with which you were called*" (1 Ephesians 4:1).

¹⁷ Consider the epistle to the Galatians. It can be divided into three sections. In the first section, Paul vindicates his authority and more importantly the truth of the Gospel which he had brought to them through a review of his life and divine calling (chapters one and two). Then in the second section, through careful exegesis of a host of Scriptural texts, he presents an excellent theological case for the true Gospel (chapters three and four). Finally, he presents practical arguments and instructions for living according to the truth (chapters five and six).

¹⁸ Philipians, First and Second Thessalonians, and for those who hold that the apostle Paul wrote the epistle of Hebrews, it would also be included in this category.

¹⁹ The letters to Timothy and Titus have been traditionally referred to as the **Pastoral Epistles**.

²⁰ "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)

²¹ See Matthew 28:18-20

²² 1 Timothy 1:1

²³ See 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1; Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1; etc.

²⁴ Rev. George Knight, in his excellent commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, summarized what Paul understood by his use of the phrase "apostle of Jesus Christ" as follows: a) he was directly appointed by Jesus Christ and empowered and authorized by him; b) he was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ; c) he was a foundation stone of the church along with the prophets as a bearer of the gospel and of God's revelation; and d) he was first in leadership and authority in the church along with the other apostles. ([The Pastoral Epistles: a Commentary on the Greek Text](#) by George W. Knight III, Eerdmans Publishing Company, [Grand Rapids, Mich.], pg. 58)

²⁵ 1 Timothy 1:11-12

²⁶ 1 Timothy 2:7

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- ²⁷ Or "ordained" as is found in the King James Version *paraggellw*
- ²⁸ *Paraggelw*
- ²⁹ 1 Timothy 6:20
- ³⁰ 1 Timothy 3:15
- ³¹ The following is based upon the testimony of a number of former members of the Alameda Reformed Bible Church. Mr. Camping taught this interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:15 during an Adult Sunday School class.
- ³² The King James Version has "behave thyself."
- ³³ Consider also that these modifiers are structural terms more closely related to a building metaphor than to the phrase "the living God."
- ³⁴ *The Pastoral Epistles*, A & C Black (Publishers) Limited, London, 1960, pg. 88.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ As the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible translate it.
- ³⁷ *Calvin's Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, Michigan), 1996, pg. 90-91.
- ³⁸ 1 Timothy 1:18-19
- ³⁹ 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5, 20:21
- ⁴⁰ Titus 1:5
- ⁴¹ Knight, pg. 294
- ⁴² 2 Timothy 4:6-8
- ⁴³ 2 Timothy 2:15-16
- ⁴⁴ 2 Timothy 4:1-5
- ⁴⁵ Cited by David W Hall in *The Arrogance of the Modern: Historical Theology Held in Contempt* by David W. Hall (Oak Ridge, TN: The Calvin Institute, 1997), p. 5
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5
- ⁴⁷ C.S. Lewis once wrote "No doubt all history in the last resort must be held by Christians to be a story with a divine plot." from *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 176
- ⁴⁸ Julian has been designated "the Apostate" because although in his early life he embraced Christianity, he later repudiated it and attempted to overpower it by aggressively promoting paganism.
- ⁴⁹ And thus arose the saying that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church."
- ⁵⁰ *A History of the Christian Church* by Williston Walker (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1970), p. 58.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ The great Ecumenical Creeds besides the Apostles Creed (which was in use for centuries) were the Nicene Creed (325/381 A.D.), Athanasian Creed, and the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.).
- ⁵⁴ *Scripture and Confession*, ed. John Skilton (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1972), p. 97.11
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.99. Earlier he wrote "J.N.D. Kelly has pointed out how imperfect a conception it is to hold that the early declaratory creeds were directed solely to counter the claims of heresy. Their primary aim was to state the wonderful truths of the new-found faith, even though anti-heretical considerations entered more powerfully into the picture as the years passed. These creeds were a part of the liturgy. They were statements of people gladly confessing their faith."
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ Consider two examples. First in 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul quotes as Scripture both Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke. Second, in 2 Peter 3:15-16 Peter declares that Paul's Epistles are part of Holy Scripture.
- ⁵⁸ *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, by William Cunningham (Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, Penn., 1989), p. 1.
- ⁵⁹ *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Volume I* by John Calvin (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996), p.17-8.
- ⁶⁰ The catechism that Calvin prepared for the church in Geneva begins by asking "What is the chief end of human life?" To the answer "To know God by whom men were created" he added "Because he created us and placed us in this world *to be glorified in us*, And it is indeed right that our life, of which himself is the beginning, *should be devoted to his glory*." Later, the Westminster Divines would echo this principle in the first question and answer of the Shorter Catechism "What is the chief end of man? *Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.*"
- ⁶¹ Consider also The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter I, section 6, as well as the Larger Catechism, Question 3.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 2.