

189 Guarding the Deposit

Last week we had the Holy Spirit's reminder, in the First Letter to Timothy, of the importance of our keeping a pure and good conscience in our Christian discipleship, bearing in mind how easy it can be for us to let a few "questionables" linger in the conscience as if these do not really matter.

Another recurring theme in this same Letter concerns the dangers of our wandering away from the true Faith into false, silly ideas, as shown in these verses from a literal Bible translation: "Nor to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which occasion doubts, rather than the stewardship of God in the faith" (1.4) / (Some have missed the mark) "turning aside to empty talking, wishing to be teachers of law, neither understanding what they say, nor about that which they confidently affirm" (1.6-7) / "But the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, cleaving to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, in lying hypocrisy being seared in their own conscience ..." (4.1-2) / "But refuse profane and old-womanish tales. And exercise yourself to godliness" (4.7) / "If anyone teaches differently, and does not consent to sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine according to godliness, he has been puffed up, understanding nothing, but is sick concerning doubts and arguments, out of which comes envy, strife, evil-speakings, evil suspicions, idle uselessness, of men whose minds have been corrupted and deprived of the truth, supposing gain to be godliness. Withdraw from such persons.... (6.3-5) / "O Timothy, guard the Deposit, having turned away from the profane empty babblings and opposing theories of the falsely named knowledge, which some asserting have missed the mark concerning the faith" (6.20-21).

We see from these words, first and foremost, that there is a "Deposit" of real, objective, unchanging, true, Christian Truth. This Deposit consists of the original, pure apostolic teaching centred on the indisputable facts concerning the Lord Jesus Christ - His incarnation, life, ministry, teaching, promises, death, resurrection and ascension. By the goodness of God the Deposit has been preserved for us all in the Holy Bible; has been proclaimed down the ages by God's faithful witnesses; and now in our generation has been received in well-founded faith by people like us. It is this Deposit that is the one genuine "KURT", the single location of "Knowledge, Understanding, Reality and Truth" for humanity. (This "KURT" we came across some months ago, in TWRs 130, 131 and 132). It is in following the teachings of this Deposit that we have been granted forgiveness by God, peace with God, and all the blessings of eternal life in the presence of God. As such, this Deposit is surely the most precious possession of human existence.

Yet, then as now, it is ignored by people clever in their own estimation who think they know better. In Paul's day the Deposit was a direct challenge to a welter of

fancy philosophical ideas in Greek and Roman thought, (eg., Acts 17.16-21), and by God's grace and martyrs' blood it flourished. Even so, before long there arose within parts of the Church false teachers who sought to change the contents of the Deposit for their own ends, perhaps out of a desire for status or wealth.

These days little has changed. The Deposit itself stands tall in defiance against the prevailing philosophies of the day, notably those ever-present "ugly sisters" of atheism, secularism and humanism. These philosophies, dependent on the scientifically-impossible belief in no-God evolutionary processes to explain our existence, place Man on the throne in place of Almighty God. Not surprisingly they ignore the Christian Deposit as much as possible, or try to downgrade it to the level of teachings found in other Faiths, both these approaches being common in public discourse and in the media.

Unfortunately the Church itself, entrusted as it is with guarding the Deposit and robustly proclaiming it to a needy world, rarely does this, its primary task. Instead, too often we have a Church seriously splintered, fearful of causing upset, busying itself with worthy but secondary issues, and allowing some of its teachers to alter the contents of the Deposit to suit themselves or the mood of the age. The dire consequences of such folly are all too apparent - lives, societies and nations in deep trouble.

No wonder that old call still comes to Christ's faithful sheep, "O Timothy, guard the Deposit".

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