What is Scriptural Doctrine?
by Irwin J. Habeck

[An essay prepared at the request of the Southeastern Wisconsin District for presentation at the Pastoral Conference of the District, June 20-21, 1955.]

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (l Tim.4,l6).

With these words our Lord through His inspired Apostle commands us to take heed to the doctrine, and with a promise of great blessing for ourselves and our hearers encourages us to obey the commend. We can, however, obey the command and thus experience the fulfillment of the promise only if we know unto what we are to take heed, what is meant by "the doctrine." Now I certainly do not wish to imply that up to today we have been groping in ignorance as to what is meant by doctrine, Scriptural doctrine, if you please, but that today a Great light is to burst in upon as the great I holds forth. I have no illusions about my capabilities. Nor do I wish to imply that there has been lacking among us in the past an understanding of the term. But it is always wholesome to review what we have learned, especially when the matter is as important as the passage quoted indicates that doctrine is. There may be an added incentive for restudying the matter at this time in the fact that in the interest of hastening a union of all Lutherans the attempt is being made within Lutheran circles to limit the term "doctrine", as well as in the fact that there is a shying away from the word and that which it describes in the effort to hasten a worldwide union of churches in the so-called ecumenical movement. May the Lord than bless and guide us as we consider the topic assigned to me a year ago by our District Convention:

What is Scriptural Doctrine?

In treating this topic I shall divide it into a number of parts, not all of which will be treated at equal length.

1. The Scriptural use of the term "doctrine."
2. The definition suggested by this investigation.
3. The need for care with deductions from doctrinal statements.
4. The sacredness of Scriptural doctrine.
5. The need for a proper perspective.
6. The power of Scriptural doctrine.

I. The Scriptural Use of the Term "Doctrine."

In investigating how the Bible itself uses the word "doctrine", I had to be rather superficial because of the press of time. I used only Young's "Analytical Concordance to the Bible" under the word "doctrine", without considering synonyms or using a dictionary. But I believe that we have enough material to serve our purpose.

Three terms in each the Hebrew and the Greek are translated "doctrine" in the King James Version. Lekach (what is received), four times; musar (chastisement, instruction), once; sh'muah (what is heard), once; didaskalia .(the content of teaching), 19 times; didache (the act of teaching), 29 times; and logos (the word), once.

A quick rundown of the implications of the word where it is used will be of some value, I believe. In Dt. 32,2 Moses calls what is said in his song (v .44), both law and gospel, "my doctrine." In Job 11,4 what Job said about himself is called his "doctrine." In Prov. 4,2 "good doctrine" is a synonym for law. In Isaiah 29,24 "doctrine" is the opposite of murmuring and error, a synonym for understanding. In Jer. 10,8 the stock is called a "doctrine of vanities." In Is. 28, 9 "doctrine" is a synonym of knowledge.

In Mt. 15,9 and Mark 7,7 the commandments of men are called "doctrines." In Eph. 4,14 we have the combination "wind of doctrine." In Col. 2,22 there is the term "doctrines and commandments of men." The word is frequent in 1. Timothy. In 1,10 "sound doctrine" is the opposite of immorality and vice. In 4,1 we heard of "doctrines of devils", referring to celibacy and fasting. In 4,6 the opposite is called "good doctrine." In 4,13 "doctrine" describes the activity which we would call preaching. 4,16 Is the passage which we quoted at the outset. In 5,17 we have the combination "word and doctrine", the sphere of the activity of certain elders. In 6,1 we hear that the "name of God and his doctrine" are not to be blasphemed. In 6,3 we have "doctrine which is according to godliness", in 2 Tim.3,10 "my doctrine." In 3,16 "doctrine" is one of the several purposes served by Scripture, the others being "reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness." In 4,3 and again Tit.l,9 and 2,1 we have "sound doctrine", i.e. healthy doctrine. In Tit.2,7 there is this: "in doctrine uncorruptness ", in 2,l0, "doctrine of God", that is which God brings.

In Mt.7:28 what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount is called "doctrine." In 16,12 we hear of the "doctrine" of the Pharisees and Sadducees. In 22,33 what Jesus said about the resurrection is called a "doctrine." In Mark 1,22 and Luke 4,32 we hear that people marveled because His "doctrine" was with authority. In 1.27 of Mark what Jesus taught is called a "new doctrine. In 4,2 what He said in the parables is called "doctrine", in 11,18 what he said in connection with the purging of the temple, in 12,38 what He said in warning against the Pharisees. In John 7,16 He speaks of "my doctrine", and 3:n the following verse calls it "the doctrine." In 18,19 the high priest asks Him about His "doctrine." In Acts 2,42 we hear of the "apostles' doctrine." In 5,28 we have "your doctrine" as parallel to teaching in the name of Jesus. In 13.12 we have "doctrine of the Lord" for what Paul said and did on Cyprus. In 17,19 we have "new doctrine" for his preaching on the Areopagus. In Romans 6,17 there is "that form of doctrine", in 16,17 "the doctrine which ye have learned." In Cor. 14, 6 we have "speak by doctrine" in a list which contains "by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying" as well. In 14,26 we have "a doctrine" as part of a list with "a psalm, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation." In 2 Tim. 4,2 we have "longsuffering and doctrine." In Heb.6,l we have "doctrine" (logos) of Christ, the objective genitive; and in the next verse "doctrine" of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. In Heb.l3,9 we find "divers and strange doctrines", in 2 Jn.9.10 "doctrine of Christ" twice, find "this doctrine," In Rev. 2.14 we have "doctrine of Balaam", in the next verse "doctrine of the Nicolaitans", in 2,24 "this doctrine", i.e. of Jezebel.

II. The Definition Suggested by this Investigation.

Reviewing the list which we have. presented, it seems evident that the Bible itself uses the term "doctrine" to describe whatever is taught to be received and believed, be it by God or by His messengers, by false teachers or by devils, whether it covers a specific subject (the resurrection of the dead, baptism, what the Nicolaitans had to say) or what is taught in general. While no sharp line of distinction is drawn between the recital of historical events and the presentation of abstract truths, the emphasis seems to be in the latter direction. But precepts for conduct, the practical side, seem to be as much included as what is true about subjects like the resurrection or baptism, the theoretical side. Sometimes the scope seems to be limited, as in the listing in 1 Cor. 14 and with reference to the uses of Scripture in 2 Tim. 3,16, but again the term covers the entire practical and theoretical field. The word "doctrine" and "Scripture" are brought into close connection in the latter passage. Looking only at that passage we might conclude that Scriptural doctrine is only what Scripture teaches to give us the Information which we need to believe in order to be saved, but not also what it does to influence us to forsake wrong behavior and incline toward right behavior. But the many other passages in which the word occurs lead us to conclude that Scriptural doctrine is all that the Scripture teaches us for us to accept. That the term "doctrine" does have the same scope as Scripture is indicated in 1 Tim. 5,17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine."

I believe that the question which needs particular study under present day circumstances is whether only that may be called Scriptural doctrine which is said in so many words in a specific place in Scripture, or whether there may be a combining of ideas from various passages. It is my impression that there is a movement

afoot in Lutheran circles to call only that doctrine in the full sense of the word which is a restatement of what is said in a single passage of Scripture, and to consider that doctrine in an inferior sense or the word which combines, what is said in a number of Scripture passages. There is an even greater shying away from names for doctrines if those names do not occur in the Scriptures, e.g., "objective ‚justification" and "verbal inspiration." I sense that trend in the manner in which the ALC is said to have corrected what it said in its Sandusky Resolutions of 1938. The resolution referred to is: "That it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines." The corrective resolution, so-called, was adopted by the ALC at Detroit in 1940: "We declare that by including this or a similar statement, we did not want to cast any doubt on the binding force of any Biblical statement (underlining mine). We concur with our Commissioners and say, 'To be sure, everything that Scriptures teach is God's Word and therefore binding.' However, for clarity's sake we add: Not every traditional explanation of a Scriptural statement is binding..." (quoted in "Another Fraternal Endeavor", page 77.) You will notice that there is no direct repudiation of the statement concerning non-fundamental doctrines, but rather a declaration concerning the binding nature of Biblical statements. Another example in point might be the treatment given the doctrine that the pope is the Antichrist, in which instance because the bald statement does not occur in Scripture, it is called everything but Scriptural doctrine.

Naturally we cannot quote the ample of Scriptures to justify our combining of what is said in a number of passages of the Scriptures to formulate a confession of what the Scriptures teach on a given matter, for all that the Scriptures say is doctrine. But the Lord has bound us to teach whatever He has commanded, and as long as every part of what is said in a doctrinal formulation is in agreement with His Word, and the combination of thoughts does not contradict what is said elsewhere in Scripture, we may properly call the combination of truths scriptural doctrine. To illustrate: Apart from the apparently spurious passage 1 John 5,7: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" there is no single passage in Scripture which teaches that there are three divine persons in one divine essence, nor do the terms "Trinity" or "triune" anywhere occur. And still the Scriptures clearly teach that there is only one God; and just as clearly do they teach that the Father is God, the Son is God, the holy Ghost is God; and just as clearly do they teach that the three are distinct the one from the other; and just as clearly do they put the three on the same level. So we know that it is Scriptural doctrine that there is only one God and that there are three divine and equal Persons. So we know that the true God is the triune God and that there is a holy Trinity, even though the terms themselves do not occur in Scripture. The Scriptures do teach what these terms say. And so we repeat: as long as every part of what is said in a doctrinal formulation is in agreement with His Word, and the combination of thoughts does not contradict what is said elsewhere in Scripture, we may well call the combination of truths Scriptural doctrine.

The Lord demands that a bishop be "apt to teach" (1 Tim.3,2); "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim.2,15); "able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit.1, 9). These commands make it our duty to put together what belongs together and separate what needs to be kept separate so that we may teach and not confuse. They make it our duty to collect the weight or what Scripture says to break the lance of those who oppose the truth with error. That's what Peter did in his Pentecost sermon, that's what happened in the apostolic council of which we are told in Acts 15. We won't contend for names for doctrines, names which are not revealed in Scriptures, for the sake of the names, but we will contend for them for the sake of the truths which they state because those truths are Scriptural doctrine. On this point Luther says, in defending the term "homoousios", which does not occur in scripture, but did summarize the truth which was defended against the attacks of Arius:

> Es ist ja wahr, man soll ausser der Schrift nichts anderes (als die Schrift) lehren. Aber dass man nicht sollte brauchen mehr und andere Worte, das kann man nicht halten, sonderlich im Zank, und wenn die Ketzer die Sachen mit blinded Griffen wollen falsch machen und der Schrift Worte verkehre; da war vonnoeten, dass man die Meinung der Schrift, mit so vielen Spruechen gesetzt, in ein kurz und Summarienwort fassete und fragte, ob sie Christum homousion hielten, wie der Schrift Meinung in allen Worten ist (quoted Pieper Dogmatik I, page 112).

I conclude this section with two quotations from Pieper. "Was die heilige Schrift an mehreren oder auch an vielen Orten ueber die einzelnen Lehren nach Text und Kontext aussagt, das stellt der Theologe an einen Ort zusammen. So entsteht die Lehre…" (I, 56). "Er bringt alles unter die Antithese, was Gottes These in der Schrift widerspricht" (I, 58).

III. The Need for Care with Deductions from Doctrinal Statements.

While contending for the right and duty to combine and summarize what is said in various portions of Scripture into a doctrinal formulation, I feel constrained to utter a word of warning against abusing such formulations by making them the starting point for a series of deductions. On the one hand, we may lose something of the life which breathes in Scripture itself if we operate too much with doctrinal statements and formulations instead of with Scripture itself. A photograph or painting are inferior to the original subject. On the other hand, if we use them as a major premise, our logic may play us tricks and we may end up by presenting something as a Scriptural doctrine which is not such. On this point I found a cute remark by Francis Pieper: "Es ist, wie wir wiederholt erinnern muessen, mit der Logik nach dem Suendenfall bei uns Menschen schlecht bestellt, und diese Logik wirk ausserdem noch im Streit durch erregte Leidenschaften verschlechtert" (I, page 97).

We all know how Rome operates starting from a premise which at least sounds like Scriptural doctrine, only to end up far afield in error. Time, Nov. 8, 1954, gives examples. Potuit, decuit, ergo fecit -- God could do it, i.e., keep Mary free from sin, it was fitting that He should do it; therefore He actually did it. Since she was free from original sin, tier body must be incorruptible, and was therefore physically taken up to heaven. Since she is greater then all creatures, and heaven is created, she: must be queen of heaven.

We are suffering in our intersynodical situation because of what happens when men operate with doctrinal statements as a major premise. In the Synodical Conference catechism there is Question 215: Why do we say "our Father"? We say "our Father" because the believers in Christ throughout the world are the children of one Father and therefore pray for and with one another. That is Scriptural doctrine. But using this statement as a major premise some have argued: There are believers In heterodox churches. Since Christians pray with one another, we may pray with the Christian heterodox churches too. We have seen the same abuse of Scriptural doctrine when a statement concerning unionism in the Brief Statement, which describes it as church fellowship with the heterodox, evidently in contrast to business or social connections, was used as a premise to prove that what was not done on the part of a group of Christians as a church, "von Gemeinschaftswegen", but as individuals, when they prayed together, was not unionistic.

The fact that this essay is poor in quotations from what my betters have said about the subject under discussion is not to indicate that I value what they have said or written lightly, but only that the time for research was limited. But I do believe that a warning is in place against a too liberal use of patristics. As long as the fathers are quoted only after a matter of doctrine has been clarified by what is said in the Scriptures, are quoted only to show that Scriptures led them to the same conclusion which has been arrived at by searching the scriptures, all is well. But if what the fathers have said is used as a starting point from which conclusions are drawn, we are on dangerous ground and may end up with what is not Scriptural doctrine.

In this connection I do not want to let the opportunity pass to express a debt of gratitude which an entire generation of our pastors ones to the venerable Professor John Meyer. His reluctance to write textbook of dogmatics is well known. His expressed reason is that we need more exegesis, not more dogmatics. While he does teach dogmatics, he makes his students sure that the doctrines which he teaches are indeed Scriptural doctrines by having them go back into the Scriptures and examine what the Scriptures say about the matter which is under discussion. There is a close examining of the context to make sure that the true sense of the passage is discovered. When conclusions are drawn after the examination of the Scriptures, there can be no doubting that what is said is Scriptural doctrine. And only then are the fathers cited. The impact of such training is to produce theologians who demonstrate with the Scriptures, not with the fathers.

I may be rambling a bit but I believe that it is practical at his point to suggest that we encourage on another to continue our policy of being reluctant to issue theological opinions, Gutachten.

Hard pressed in controversy, a congregation or its pastor might welcome a conference decision, or a synodical resolution, or an opinion of our theological faculty or our Church Union Committee or our Conference of Presidents on some matter. But it has been our general policy to refrain, and to urge instead that the battle be fought with pertinent portions of Scripture as weapons. The doctrine upon which all real blessing depends is Scriptural doctrine, and we had best draw it from the fount.

IV. The Sacredness of Scriptural Doctrine.

We all know that our Lord Jesus commands us to be teaching all things whatsoever He has commanded, that He tells us that only they are His genuine disciples who continue in His word. We know that He contended for the absoluteness of every word that is written when He said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn.10,35).

Now we have become accustomed to making a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines. We call those fundamental doctrines which must be known and believed if a sinner is to be saved, and at the head of that list is the truth that Jesus is our personal Savior. Non-fundamental doctrines do not have a direct and immediate bearing upon the faith which saves, saving faith could exist without a full knowledge of them.

This distinction serves its purpose when it is used to glorify the supreme importance of the gift which the Father gave when He sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

But the making of this distinction has also led to conclusions which are harmful, to say the least. To conclude that because a man may be saved if only he believes the fundamental doctrines, it is not so serious if he holds to error in some non-fundamental doctrine is to fly in the face of the facts. Non-fundamental doctrines are Scriptural doctrine. To forsake a Scriptural doctrine, however, is disobedience to the Lord, and this sin has the leaven-like nature of every other sin and can leaven the whole lump. That's why Jesus calls all false prophets without exception ravening wolves. Pieper says, "'Es gilt daher, klar zu erkennen und festzuhalten, dass die 'glueckliche Inkonsequenz', vermoege welche durch Gottes besondere Bewahrung ein Irrender _fuer_ _seine_ _Person_ nicht aus dem Glauben faellt, dem Irrtum selbst nimmermehr _Existenzberechtigung_ in der Kirche verschaffen kann." (I, 99).

We do well to heed what Luther says about the need for rigidity and not tolerance where doctrine is concerned. The old epistle for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany, Colossians 3,12-17, speaks of the duty of putting on "bowels of mercies." In this connection Luther comments:

> Aber solche herzliche Barmherzigkeit ist zu beweisen allein Christen und unter den Christen. Denn wider die, so das Evangelium verdammen und verfolgen, muss man sich anders stellen: Denn hier gilt es nicht, dass meine liebe sollte sich erbarmen, und falsche Lehre dulden und leiden. Was Glaube und Lehre antrifft, das hat weder Liebe noch Geduld, da muss ich mit Ernst widerhalten, und nicht ein Haar breit weichen. Sonst, wo die Leute den Glauben lessen gehen und bekennen, ob sie wohl mit dem Leben schwach sind, soll ich immer und immer herzlich und barmherzig sein, nicht strafen, treiben, jagen, sondern locken, bitten, flehen, tragen und dulden. Denn gebrechlich Leben verderbet die Christenheit nicht, sondern uebet sie; abet gebrechliche Lehre und falscher Glaube verderbet alles. Darum gilt hier weder leiden noch erbarmen, sondern eitel zuernen und streiten und wuergen; doch nur mit Gottes Wort.

Many believe that the differences which separate Lutherans from Lutherans are not serious enough to cause all of the fuss which we of the conservative camp make about them. They are brushed aside as lying only in the field of non-fundamental doctrines. And when the issues which threaten the continued existence of the Synodical Conference boil down to the charge of not setting forth doctrine fully and not applying it consistently, it is maintained that to separate for such reasons would be making a mountain out of a molehill, since there is

agreement in all fundamental doctrines. But we cannot think thus lightly of matters of matters which involve doctrine if we bow to the Word of the Lord who makes every doctrine, fundamental or nun-fundamental, sacred to us because it is Scriptural doctrine.

V. The Need for a Proper Perspective.

While all doctrine is sacred and no doctrine may be abandoned nor deviation from a doctrine be considered not divisive, there is in my opinion need for the encouragement to keep doctrines in the proper perspective. In time of controversy we are in danger of not doing that, we are apt to overlook the one wholesome lesson which the manner of distinguishing between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines ought to teach. We are apt to harp upon those doctrines concerning which there is controversy, and to put too little emphasis upon those doctrines which because of their fundamental nature demand most emphasis. When that happens, we have fanaticism.

I shall never forget a member whom I had in my first parish. Whenever conversation shifted to spiritual matters, his one contribution was to assure me that he would never think of becoming a lodge member. I never heard him make a positive confession of his faith in his Savior. You see, the lodge question was a matter of controversy there, and for him the correct position on that question was all that was needed to stand accepted. Disproportionate emphasis upon certain doctrines which may be the. object of controversy may give us people who know what they are against more than what they are for.

Losing our perspective concerning the relative importance of doctrines, even though all of them are Scriptural, may lead us to attempt to finish the attic before we have laid a solid foundation for the house. If we were to start discussing the doctrine of the Antichrist with a searcher after the truth who comes from Roman Catholic circles, we could well antagonize him before we had the opportunity to preach sin and grace to him. Or if we were to start our discussion with a novice by speaking of the lodge question, we could only confuse him because he does not have the solid foundation upon which to place the information which we are giving him.

That there must be consideration for spiritual immaturity, and that there must be an emphasis upon the fundamental doctrines is evident from the example of Paul and a remark in Hebrews. In 1 Corinthians 3,2 Paul writes: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." It is almost frightening, and must certainly lead us in our day to continue to be very earnest in our self-examination, to note to what he points as evidence of not being ready for meat: "There is among you envying, and strife, and divisions" (v.3). The point which we want to make, however, is that Paul teaches that it is necessary to recognize how much of doctrine people have a capacity to receive, and, to keep on giving them milk until they are strong enough to eat meat. He does not leave us in doubt as to what lie considers milk: "I determined not to know anything among, you, save Jesus Christ, Fund him crucified" (2,2). We shall have to be very careful about overburdening our people beyond their capacity especially in these days of controversy, and shall have show a great deal of patience, not indeed with those who oppose the truth, but with those who plead weakness by saying, "I can't see." I am not submitting a brief for laziness on the part of either our pastors and teachers, or on the part of our people. The ideal is to see clearly also in matters of controversy. You have that ideal for those who have been entrusted with the public ministry and the rank and file of their people in Ephesians 4,13-15:

> Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the: measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

The other passage which indicates a need for keeping our perspective in the presentation of Scriptural doctrine is Hebrews 5,12-14:

When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Not on the same plane, but illustrative of the principle: are those passages in Romans: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (14,1). "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (15,1).

VI. The Power of Scriptural Doctrine.

In this our day we are much concerned about the power of error. And rightly so. The Lord through St. Paul calls our attention to the power of error: "A little, leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5, 9). We have a grand demonstration of this truth in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul demonstrates that the denial of the physical resurrection must lead eventually to a loss of the saving faith. Innumerable examples must be adduced from church history to demonstrate the chain reaction set in motion by one error. So also St. Paul says of errorists: "Their word will eat as doth a canker" 2 Tim.2,17).

I do believe, however, that we can become so frightened by the power of error that we become negative in our thinking and lose sight of the fact that there is a power inherent also in the truth, in Scriptural doctrine. We know of people who are so afraid of germs that they are constantly on the defensive and lose sight of the fact that by cultivating a healthy body through proper diet, exercise, and rest, they can, build up a resistance to germs and disease.

We are familiar with the host of passages which speak of the power of the Word, and Scriptural doctrine is only a repetition of the Word. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer.23,29). "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Ro.1,l6). "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb.4,12).

Scriptural doctrine has in it the power to bring about a separation between those who accept the truth and those who oppose it. After all, doctrine centers about Christ, and of Him Simeon prophesied: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; -- that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk.2,34.35), We know of the separation which His doctrine brought about at Capernaum. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" "From that time many of his disciples -went back, and walked no more -with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (Jn.6,60.66.67). St. John in his day experienced the expelling power of Scriptural doctrine : "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 Jn.2,19). We have the same truth in a section in which the word "doctrine" appears twice: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will no endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim.4,2-4a).

But there is also a convincing, winning power in Scriptural doctrine. The Twelve whom our Lord Jesus assembled about himself were indeed babes. They accepted Jesus as the Christ. But even the details of this doctrine were not clear to them. When He foretold His passion, they just shook their heads, they couldn't see it. The object of their hope was similarly confused, they were sorely tainted with millenialstic hopes. But they had

a loving and. patient Master, and before the impact of His doctrine error began to recede. Eventually He promised and sent them the other Comforter, and then the mists of error were all dissipated and they believed and confessed only the truth.

Scriptural doctrine has convincing, winning power, but there are so many recesses in which error may lurk that it takes time for the good leaven of sound doctrine to convince and win entirely. It took three years in the case of the Twelve under the perfect Teacher. Paul, in the passage quoted before, saw the need of keeping on giving the Corinthians milk because the process of building them up had not gone forward far enough to make them ready for meat. But the confidence is implied that the milk of doctrine had in it the power to promote the growth which would eventually make them ready for meat. If we meet with stubborn opposition to Scriptural doctrine, no doubt we have a case where the expelling power of doctrine has worked. But even in the case of such opposition we may still hope to win out because of the power of Scriptural doctrine. Speaking of a bishop, Paul says, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit.1, 9). Notice the hope which is held out of winning, of convincing the gainsayers.

How much more, then, with those who honestly mean well, but in many cases can't see, and in other cases have been confused by "every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph.4,14), must we be ready to exercise the patience for which our Lord himself left us an example. It is considered axiom: "Time is on the side of the unionist." That's true to human nature.

> Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
> That to be hated, needs but to be seen.
> But seen too often, familiar with its face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

But let us not forget that time is also on the side of Scriptural doctrine, either to expel the persistent adherents and proponents of error, or to promote growth "up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph.4,15); to complete the fulfillment of the promise with which we started and with which we now close: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Amen.