

c. The need of struggle against false doctrine within the Church (the polemic function of the Church)

In II Timothy 2:15-18, Paul exhorts his son in the faith:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some.

And in Titus 1:7-11 Paul writes:

For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward... holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain.

Paul struggles against false doctrine because he knows it can upset the faith of professed believers, and because he knows that such teaching will spread like gangrene, threatening the health and life of the church. In some cases he identifies the proponents of false doctrine by name, and says that they must be silenced by the teaching of sound doctrine.

This need of struggle against false doctrine may be seen in the Church's combat with Gnosticism and Monarchianism in the second and third centuries. It may also be seen in Ulrich Zwingli's *Commentarius de Vera et Falsa Religione*.

d. The need of combating anti-Christian attacks and philosophies (the apologetic function of the Church)

In I Peter 3:15 Peter writes: "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

In I John 4:1 John exhorts: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

In Jude 3-4 Jude says: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."