

“Sound Doctrine” as the Basis for Christian Unity in the Epistles

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When contemplating the most serious threats to the Christian faith, it is worth first looking at them from a historical perspective. It is worth noting not only since when, but also by whom the Church is attacked. It is well-known that evil attacks good from all sides: “from the inside,” like Judas, who was one of Jesus’ disciples, as well as “from the outside,” like the guards of the chief priests and Pharisees who came from Gethsemane to track down Jesus (see: John 18 : 38).¹

The part of the Gospel message that guarantees Jesus’ disciples unity is “sound doctrine.” Not understanding it led Judas to erroneously favor material things (“thirty pieces of silver” – see Matthew 26 : 15)² over faith in the Son of God, and it led the leaders of the people and the Romans to crucify Christ (they had a different image of the expected Messiah). Not understanding the essence of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth – His Gospel – consequently led to the tragedy of the cross.³ Thus full comprehension of the essence of “sound doctrine” consists of the decisive bond of all the minds of this world: both those inside the Church and those that are still outside it.

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- 1 Cf. B. Zbroja, *Znaczenie terminów własnych Ewangelii św. Jana dla jej teologii*, Kraków 2002, p. 61–62.
 - 2 Cf. R. A. Coughenour, *Srebro*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Biblijna*, red. P. J. Achtemeier, Warszawa 1999, p. 1134.
 - 3 The drama of Christ’s crucifixion and His passion is related to two possibilities of perception: not understanding the essence of His Gospel of redemption and the rejection of something that had not yet been grasped or a full understanding of it, but nonetheless the killing of the Son of God in order to appropriate His legacy (the heir to the vineyard killed by the unworthy tenants – cf. Mark 12 : 7, Matthew 21 : 28. Luke 20 : 14). In the Church’s early history there were the so-called *judaizantes*, whose views were rejected by Paul, who said that deeds cannot be any form of justifying a person but are simply a basis for faith in Jesus. If that is so, then it is evident even in the early Church that Jesus’ actions and words were not fully understood.

The main question, then, is: what is the “sound doctrine” of Jesus’ Gospel? How can we find it in the New Testament? How can it be properly understood and with the aid of what models and words can it be preached to other people? These questions have been present in Christianity since the very beginning. After all, it is well-known that Peter himself initially did not fully understand Jesus’ words, for which he received a harsh admonition from the Lord: “You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do” (see: Mark 8 : 33)⁴ and from Paul: “And when Kephias came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong” (see: Galatians 2 : 11).⁵ The full assimilation of Jesus’ “sound doctrine” of the Gospel thus is penetrated with what Christ revealed to the Church with the human mind assisted by the light of the Holy Spirit. The proper understanding of the Gospel, or the essence of Jesus’ intention, is a key fact that binds together all Christians, who are one in evangelical unanimity (ὁμοθυμαδόν – see: Acts 1 : 14⁶). Apart from the person of Jesus Christ, there is no factor that is more important to the unity of the people of the Church than the “sound doctrine” of His Gospel properly understood and practiced by the faithful. The inspired author of the Pastoral Epistles (1–2 Timothy and Titus) devotes the most space to such an understanding of Jesus’ teaching.⁷

Among the terms that refer to something “sound” (ὕγιαίνουση)⁸ in reference to human thinking or speech, there are three distinct doctrinal dimensions:

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- 4 Cf. H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka*, Poznań–Warszawa 1997, p. 214.
- 5 Cf. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy, *Katolicki Komentarz Biblijny*, Warszawa 2001, p. 1376–1377. This is dealt with more extensively in: K. Romaniuk, *Czyż nie płonęło w nas serce, gdy wyjaśniał nam pisma... Objaśnienia trudności nowotestamentalnych*, Kraków 1998, p. 185n.
- 6 Cf. *Dzieje Apostolskie. Listy św. Pawła*, oprac. A. S. Jasiński, Warszawa 1997, p. 33.
- 7 In this article, I do not deal with the entirety of Paul’s complex understanding of those three epistles, 1–2 Timothy and Titus, because this is in no way related to the phenomenon under study. The authorship of the epistles is discussed in greater detail by J. Stępień, *Listy do Tesaloniczan i pasterskie. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań 1979, p. 309–315.
- 8 The term ὑγιαίνω appears in the New Testament twelve times: Luke 5 : 31, 7 : 10, and 15 : 27; 1 Timothy 1 : 10, 6 : 3; 2 Timothy 1 : 13, 4 : 3; and in Titus 1 : 9, 13, 2 Titus:2,1, 2; 3 John 1, 2. However, in his Gospel Luke only refers to regular physical ailments and their remedies (see: Luke 5 : 31, 7 : 10, and 15 : 27). Meanwhile, 3 John 1 : 2 refers to the initial greeting of the priest expressed as the wish for good tidings and health to the beloved Gaius (verse 1) – see H. Bachmann, W. A. Slaby, *Konkordanz zum Novum Testamentum Graece von Nestle-Aland 26 Auflage und zum Greek New Testament 3rd edition*, Berlin–New York 1987, p. 1815. The word ὑγιαίνω means “to be health, heal, and treat” – R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu. Wydanie z pełną lokalizacją haseł, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych*, Warszawa 1994, p. 615.

science (διδασκαλία), or the content of the message preached; the word (λόγος), the appropriately selected tool of the kerygma; and the awakening of faith (πίστις), which is the intended aim of the entire work of evangelization. For this reason, the research material will be divided into three parts, depending on what the hagiographer emphasized in the teaching directed to his audience: Timothy and Titus. "Sound doctrine" (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) appears the most times (four) in the pastoral epistles: 1 Timothy 1 : 10, 2 Timothy 4 : 3, Titus 1 : 9, and Titus 2 : 1. Meanwhile, the expression "sound words" (ὕγιαινούση λόγος) appears twice: in 1 Timothy 6 : 3 and 2 Timothy 1 : 13, while "sound faith" (ὕγιαινούση πίστις) also appears twice: in Titus 1 : 13 and Titus 2 : 2.

The literature on the topic under study is present in practically every Biblical commentary to the Pastoral Epistles. The work that deals most closely with it is Piotr R. Gryziec, "*Zdrowa nauka*" w *Listach Pasterskich*.⁹ This theological matter receives much attention in the world-famous commentary: William E. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*.¹⁰ Important suggestions related to the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles can be found in Jerome Murphy O'Connor's *Paul: A Critical Life*.¹¹

1. "Sound Doctrine" (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία)

The principle of "sound doctrine" (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) is mentioned in all three Pastoral Epistles. It should therefore be accepted that this dimension of the apostle's teaching is the most important, since it is present in both Epistles to Timothy and in the Epistle to Titus.¹² From the very beginning, the inspired author is decidedly in opposition to the "false doctrines" (ἕτεροδιδασκαλίᾳ)¹³ that must be stopped by Timothy (1 Timothy 1 : 3; 6 : 3). Likewise, Titus is obliged to preach and strengthen the new rules for thinking and living, leveling all that contradicts sound doctrine.

9 Cf. P. R. Gryziec, "*Zdrowa nauka*" w *Listach Pasterskich*, „Collectanea Theologica” 76 (2006) nr 4, p. 5–28.

10 Cf. W. E. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Nashville 2000 (Word Biblical Commentary, 46).

11 Cf. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul a critical life*, Oxford–New York 1997.

12 Cf. P. R. Gryziec, "*Zdrowa nauka*" w *Listach Pasterskich*, op. cit., 5nn.

13 Cf. ἕτεροδιδασκαλίᾳ, [in:] H. Bachmann, W. A. Slaby, *Konkordanz zum Novum Testamentum Graece...*, op. cit., p. 714. Cf. Z. Abramowiczówna, *Słownik grecko-polski*, t. 2, Warszawa 1960, p. 321.

The first Epistle to Timothy begins with a call to a strong purification of doctrine of the influence of various errors. After a very brief address of the epistle (1 Timothy 1 : 1–2), the hagiographer immediately proceeds to present the most important task required of Timothy: “sound doctrine” (ὕγιαίνουση διδασκαλία), which is in complete opposition to the above-mentioned “false doctrine” (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω). However, the inspired author heeds his addressees’ attention above all to the sinful behavior of people who violate the sound rules of living lives based on the Ten Commandments or, more generally, on the teachings of God’s law (νόμος – verse 9). Here he lists a long litany of people’s sins: “the lawless and unruly, the godless and sinful, the unholy and profane, those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, the unchaste, practicing homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to sound doctrine” (verses 9–10). Here, the hagiographer mentions various types of behaviors that are in their essence opposed to “sound doctrine” (ὕγιαίνουση διδασκαλία) no fewer than fourteen times.¹⁴ Thus sound doctrine must shape within the person behavior that is completely opposed to the above-mentioned litany of sins: respect for the moral law, fidelity to the faith, piety, a holy life, nobility, spirituality, respect for one’s parents, concern for life, the purity of one’s actions, heterosexuality, respect for human freedom, truthfulness, and honesty.¹⁵ However, the negative admonition of the inspired text is much stronger thanks to the meaning of the words used in it. Analogously, in the phrase preceding the above-quoted two verses, the inspired author refers to not only behavior, which is the effect of human thinking, but also the convictions and words, which are also contrary to “sound doctrine.”

At the beginning of the epistle, the inspired author completely prohibits false doctrine (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω, verse 3). Here, the hagiographer mentions two key elements of false doctrine (verse 4): “myths and endless genealogies” (μῦθος καὶ γενεαλογία,¹⁶ literally “myths and genealogies”), which are conducive only to human inquisitiveness, not to God’s plan. False doctrine does not contain in itself the essence of God’s truth, but it solely deals with little known things. These “myths and genealogies” concentrate their attention on the verbal message containing things invented by humans (μῦθος) as well as

14 Cf. W. E. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, op. cit., p. 29–43.

15 Cf. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, D. G. Reid, *Słownik teologii św. Pawła*, Warszawa 2010, p. 518.

16 Cf. H.-H. Schroeder, *Pierwszy List do Tymoteusza*, [in:] *Międzynarodowy Komentarz do Pisma Świętego*, red. W. R. Farmer, Warszawa 2001, p. 1577.

matters related to kinship (γενεαλογία). Of course, there are two genealogies of Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels according to St. Luke and St. Matthew; however, these Gospel lineages serve only to support the truth that Jesus is a real person. The essence of all the Gospels is the fact that He is above all the Son of God. Thus focusing solely on Jesus Christ's genealogy causes both the teacher and his listeners to focus not on His being the Son of God, but on a secondary aspect that does not cause them to form their thinking based on the redemptive truth, instead concentrating their attention on the inquisitiveness of the human mind, which does not lead to anything great.¹⁷ Likewise, Timothy opposes this phenomenon, presenting the essence of the truth that leads to Jesus, the Son of God and real man. Concentrating one's attention solely on the "myths and genealogies" is thus a clear factor that undermines the unities of believers in Christ.

In the second Epistle to Timothy, specific guidelines related to "sound" doctrine appear at the end of the text. After the admonishment about sound doctrine, the inspired author summarizes his evangelizing work, noting that he has finished the race (2 Timothy 4 : 7). In the following verses, he discusses his failures and implores Timothy to come to him and "bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, the papyrus rolls, and especially the parchments" (verse 13) and ends the entire letter with a greeting (verse 19–22). "Sound doctrine" is thus presented here not as the point of departure of the epistle, as was in the case of the letter addressed to Timothy, but as a summary and final reminder. However, in both cases this real doctrine is the fundamental topic that is the pillar of authentic kerygma for all three Pastoral Epistles.

The Second Epistle to Timothy presents the concept of "sound doctrine" and its confrontation with false teaching somewhat differently. "Sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4 : 3)¹⁸ refers to moral attitudes that clearly contradict it. The hagiographer admonishes Timothy to preach doctrine persistently, regardless of the time: "whether it is convenient or inconvenient" (εὐκαίρως ἀκαίρως – verse 2) and of the state of the addressee, whose error must sometimes be pointed out, who should be admonished or whose spirits need to be raised. The inspired author reminds Timothy of the important truth that there will soon be a time when people "will not tolerate sound doctrine" (2 Timothy

17 Cf. R. Rubinkiewicz, *Wstęp do Nowego Testamentu*, Poznań 1996, p. 383.

18 Cf. E. Naradoni, *Drugi List do Tymoteusza*, [in:] *Międzynarodowy Komentarz do Pisma Świętego*, op. cit., p. 1585.

4 : 3). The Greek term for time, *καιρός*, which means the appropriate time for a fruitful accomplishment of a good work, is interesting here. Thus God always chooses the appropriate hour for grace, but some recipients of God's teaching close off their interior, which does not tolerate (*ἀνέχω*) the healing truth. Next, the hagiographer's admonishment focuses on elaborating the attitudes of those listeners closed to the truth who cultivate in their interior their disordered desires and choose (*ἐπισωρεύω*) for themselves teachers who will solely soothe their ears. Thus we see here a complete reversal of the essence of the order of the teaching, as the teacher does not form his students, but teaches that which his students expect. In this case, the teacher speaks only what the listeners want to hear in such a form that brings them pleasure. Therefore, there is no possibility of shaping the attitudes of those who hear the word, as they receive only the teachings that they themselves want to hear.

In the Epistle to Titus, the hagiographer also mentions preaching "sound doctrine" first as one of requirements expected of candidates for bishops, whom Titus was supposed to install in every city in Crete, and then about the task for Titus himself, who is obliged to preach it personally. Thus in this epistle "sound doctrine" is the essence of the head of the Church, who leads his community of Christians, preaching all that comes from God and forming his faithful in love and in truth.

The hagiographer admonishing Titus has very high and specific expectations of candidates for the episcopacy or the priesthood. Priests are therefore responsible not only for themselves, but also for their houses; meanwhile, bishops are to be completely devoted managers of God's secrets (*ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμου*). The inspired author demands that episcopal candidates be faultless, modest, sober, composed, not greedy, just, wise, and pious and that they faithfully follow the Church's teachings (see: Titus 1 : 7–9).¹⁹ At this point, the hagiographer moves from matters of lesser weight (faultlessness) to morally upright behavior and spiritual matters; the latter is described here as fidelity to "sound teaching." Thus according to a hierarchical form of argumentation, in this service it is the most important element of a bishop's service. If the head of the Church does not follow "sound teaching" in the most obvious way, he is the cause of division and the weakening of the unity of God's people. When the head of the local Church errs in teaching and the true faith, he provokes argument, desires villainous gain, and preaches only myths, not the

19 Cf. W. E. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, op. cit., p. 384–393.

Gospels about Jesus. The author of the epistle addressed to Titus cautions his addressee of such a state. "Sound teaching" is also a very important factor in admonishing or convincing people who are resistant (verse 9). By faithfully following God's teachings, the head of the Church can thanks to it correct not only himself and those who listen to him, but also those who still err in their faith or in moral life, which excludes them from the community. Having a sound foundation for listening to the Gospel, we can with it improve our own mind and then the minds of the faithful, but also those of the non-believers by telling them what is the truth that comes from God and what is not a person's fantasy. This fidelity to "sound teaching" is manifested in one's actions. The author thus says that "To the clean all things are clean, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is clean" (Titus 1 : 15). Thus "sound teaching" encompasses not only what is in one's mind (focusing on the truth or on invented myths), but also on the behavior that the hagiographer mentions in his very specific requirements for priests and bishops. In light of the above words directed to Titus, one has to accept the conclusion that in the epistle to him "sound teaching" is above all convincing the mind and concentrating one's attention on matters that are essential for salvation. "Sound teaching" encompasses both a person's entire life and the morality of his actions; it is clear here that one must go hand in hand with the other: "sound teaching" is the mind striving for the truth that comes from God and for a moral life based on the principles of the Gospels.

At the beginning of the second chapter of the Epistle to Titus, the author moves from the principles that should form the leaders of the Church (the bishops) to instructions for the subordinates (the faithful). Here, he mentions practically all states and social groups: the elderly, the young, and even slaves. The most important trait of every disciple of Jesus is moderation connected with stability and fidelity to "sound teaching," the personal preaching of which is Titus' most important duty.²⁰ At this point, the hagiographer does not admonish the priests or the bishops, but Titus himself, who is not free of preaching the "sound principles" of life to all the people in the Church. However, Titus is not only required to properly preach the words of truth, but he is also to be a "model of good deeds in every respect" for everyone (Titus 2 : 7). Thus the leader of the Church cannot solely be an excellent speaker; he

20 Cf. M. Goodwin, *List do Tytusa*, [in:] *Międzynarodowy Komentarz do Pisma Świętego*, op. cit., p. 1590.

must simultaneously put into practice everything he preaches. It is also worth mentioning here those with false beliefs: the heretics (αἰρετικός), whom the hagiographer mentions in Titus 3 : 10, giving Titus guidelines for how to treat them. He encourages Titus to admonish them once or twice, but if there is no result, he must distance himself from them in order to not waste his strength and apostolic zeal saving someone who is wrong-headed and sinful (verse 11) and has no desire to accept Jesus' "sound teaching."

The "sound teaching" (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) that the hagiographer notes writing to Timothy and Titus is the basis for relations in the community of believers in Christ. Both admonishments directed at Timothy (1 Timothy 1 : 10 and 2 Timothy 4 : 3) are caused by the appearance of pseudo-teachers in the community, the focus of attention on matters that are not essential to faith in Jesus ("myths and genealogies;" see 1 Timothy 1 : 4), which only cause human minds to aimlessly inquire and do not bring the faithful closer to meeting Jesus and His work of salvation. The hagiographer above all criticizes teachers who proclaim admonishments invented by them, not heeding any attention to Jesus or His teaching. Silencing those who propagate such "false teaching" is the duty of the addressee of the epistle. The second cautioning present in this same part of the epistle is even more interesting from the perspective of "sound teaching;" i.e., it does not deal with the teacher himself, who deals with relatively petty things and avoids the most important truths of the faith, but the recipients of false teaching. He speaks very strongly about people who have "itching ears" (κνηθόμενοι τὴν ἀκοίην) and desire only "myths," not the truth and "sound doctrine."²¹ Consequently, these listeners will listen to those teachers who will tell them whatever they like to hear (see: 2 Timothy 4 : 3) and will not want to accept "sound doctrine." Thus everyone who does not want to listen to the truth will promote teachers of falsehoods because of his own desire to live in a pleasant and comfortable illusion. In this case, the hagiographer does not deal with the very person of the teacher, but with the listener who only wants to scratch his "itching ear," not a real healing of his internal hearing.²² Thus both Epistles to Timothy deal with the topic of rejecting "sound doctrine" through either the teachers who do not deal with what they should, or through listeners who listen to those who, they chose

21 Cf. K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego Testamentu*, t. 2, Poznań 1999, p. 363.

22 Cf. W. E. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, op. cit., p. 560nn.

under the influence of their desires. The hagiographer's guidelines contained in the Epistle to Titus focus on the correct formation of leaders of the Church, above all bishops, who themselves must follow the infallible "sound doctrine" (see: Titus 1 : 9). Titus' responsibility is to personally preach what is consistent with "sound doctrine" (Titus 2 : 1). Thus none of the authoritatively established Church leaders can preach false theories, myths, genealogies, words that are only intended to appeal to the public, or anything that contradicts the "sound teaching" of the Gospels.

Now we will move on to another dimension of "sound doctrine." It will not so much be its contents (διδασκαλία), as the form of expression, which is the most perfect tool in interpersonal communications – the word (λόγος) said or written down, penetrating into man's thinking or expressing the ideals present in it.

2. "Sound Words" (ὕγιαινούση λόγος)

The expression "sound words" (ὕγιαινούση λόγος) appears in both Epistles to Timothy, although it does not appear in the Epistle to Titus at all. Meanwhile, in the Epistles to Timothy the expression "sound faith" (ὕγιαινούση πίστις), which can be found only in the Epistle to Titus, as will be discussed in the next paragraph, does not appear. The "sound word" (ὕγιαινούση λόγος) is thus a unique topic of admonishment directed to Timothy, while the responsibility to teach "sound faith" (ὕγιαινούση πίστις) is entrusted to Titus. The expressions "sound word" and "sound faith" are contained in the expression "sound doctrine" (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) present in all the Pastoral Epistles.

A discussion of the word "sound word" should begin with an excerpt from the First Epistle to Timothy, in the last fifth part,²³ in which the hagiographer openly cautions against heretics and people who lust after material profit. The pericope 1 Timothy 6 : 3–10 presents the traits of people who do not faithfully adhere to the "sound words" (ὕγιαινούση λόγος). For the hagiographer, they are proud people who are "sick" with inquisitiveness and the desire for

23 The Epistle to Timothy implicitly is divided into five parts apart from the prologue (1 : 1–2) and conclusion (6 : 21): I – the struggle against false doctrine (1 : 3–2); II – Discipline in the Church (2 : 1–3, 16); III – The contents of false doctrine (4 : 1–11); IV – proper exercising of pastoral work (4 : 11–6, 2); and V – Various admonitions (6 : 3–20), see: R. Rubinkiewicz, *Wstęp do Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 383.

verbal debates. However, the most distinct fruit of leaving sound words is a rejection of the truth and of piety (verse 5).²⁴ Thus a natural aspiration of the human mind is not inquiry or discussion, but the discovery of the essence of truth, which leads to the discovery of its author. By rejecting the search for the essence of truth and piety, heretics distort their minds and enter the road of envy, conflict, blasphemy, and mistrust.²⁵ Thus the fruit of rejecting the “sound word” is, according to the inspired author, a distortion of the personal form of thinking and of proper interpersonal relationships. The “sound word” focuses attention on the truth that it carries, leading the person to be pious and kind towards his neighbors. Every person’s way of thinking depends on the relationship between his mind and the truth and on values a fact is based and what values it serves. One also cannot create an effective model of thinking without proper interpersonal relations. It is only in confrontation with one’s neighbor, who is also a thinking person, that one can understand him or herself, his or her values, or the aims of his or her activity.

A second, no less important matter that should be brought up here is the fact that the hagiographer devoted much space to the topic of money in this pericope. For the author of the First Epistle to Timothy, there is an important distinction between genuine piety and profit. For people who have rejected the “sound words,” profit is more important; meanwhile, they consider piety to be a means to making more money. Here we can find an important truth that “sound doctrine” heeds attention to. What is most important in Timothy’s community of believers: genuine piety, or money? For heretics, money is most important, but for the hagiographer and Timothy as well as all who sincerely follow the “sound word” it is genuine piety. The hagiographer resolutely says that “we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it” (verse 7).²⁶ Meanwhile, lust for money or for power is completely irrational when confronted with the final judgment of every person. The heretical doctrine verified by the faithful of the Church can cause them great scandal, as when they look at their leaders, who are at the same time supposed to preach Jesus’ Gospel, and see their desire to become wealthy, they see in them not Jesus’ disciples, but regular greedy opportunists

24 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 385.

25 Cf. K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 385.

26 Cf. W. E. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, op. cit., p. 333–349.

or even skillful actors who play in a dishonest religious theater in order to gain temporary fame and fortune.

The Second Epistle to Timothy deals with the "sound word" (ὕγιαίνουσα λόγος) at the beginning, right after the prologue. The hagiographer reminds Timothy to "stir into flame" the internal present Divine charism through the imposition of hands. Timothy should play an active part in the difficulties and hardships that he bears for the Lord (verse 8). After these words of encouragement, the inspired author claims that he knows perfectly whom he has trusted (verse 12). Next, he implores Timothy to use the "sound words" that he heard from him as a model (2 Timothy 1 : 13).²⁷ He notes two elements that are essential for the unity of the community of believers in Jesus: the sacraments of the Church and the one Gospel preached to everyone. The inspired author also encourages Timothy to apply the "sound words" as an infallible criterion of faith and love (verse 13) that should be guarded like a good deposit with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit (verse 14). The person of the Holy Spirit appears one more time in the Epistle to Titus (Titus 3 : 5), when His full activity is tied to the sacrament of baptism. In these two fragments of the Pastoral Epistles, "sound words" are tied to the sacraments of holy orders (2 Timothy 1 : 6) and baptism (Titus 3 : 5).

The "sound words" (ὕγιαίνουσα λόγος) that the hagiographer gave to Titus come from Jesus Christ Himself (1 Timothy 6 : 3) and must be a clear model of behavior (2 Timothy 1 : 13). "Sound words" distance human minds above all from fruitless inquisitiveness or conflicts, leading to the discovery of the authentic truth and piety: closeness to God. Truth and communion with the Lord always has the effects of creating a community and solidifying interpersonal relationships. The false doctrines of the heretics, meanwhile, have the opposite effect. Falsehood and a lack of faith quickly lead to divisions, violent conflicts, and internal anxiety. "Sound doctrine" also encompasses the truth about the person's proper relationship to material values. The person's concentration on piety and communion with God at the same time gives way to a weakening of the bond with money. Meanwhile, people who err in their faith move farther away from true and permanent values, looking solely for temporal material profit. These "sound words" that were given to Timothy must be a model for acting in faith for him and all other people responsible for the Church.

27 Cf. M. Goodwin, *List do Tytusa*, op. cit., p. 1590.

In addition to the presented above doctrine (διδασκαλία) and the properly selected word (λόγος), the last element of “sound doctrine” that the hagiographer imparts on Timothy and Titus is “sound faith” (ὕγιαινούση πίστις), which is the final product of evangelization. “Sound doctrine” presents Jesus and His redemptive work, not “myths and genealogies.” “Sound words” are a perfect tool for transmitting thoughts and at the same time a model for teaching about Jesus. Meanwhile, “sound faith” contains the mystery that arises in the heart of the person listening to the word of life and uniting with Jesus in His Church.

3. “Sound Faith” (ὕγιαινούση πίστις)

The previously discussed expression “sound words” (ὕγιαινούση λόγος) appears only in the Epistles to Timothy (1 Timothy 6 : 3 and 2 Timothy 1 : 13), while the expression “sound faith” (ὕγιαινούση πίστις) appears only in the Epistle to Titus. We can ask why the hagiographer used these concepts in these letters. It seems that the expression “sound doctrine” (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) that appears in all three epistles comes from the same inspired author, but the different expressions “sound words” (λόγος) and “sound faith” (πίστις) could be a point of departure for further attempts at explaining the problem of the authorship of the pastoral epistles.

“Sound faith,” a characteristic expression from the Epistle to Titus, appears in an early part of this text. After the address of the epistle as well as the above-cited instructions about the requirements for bishops, who were above all responsible for “sound doctrine,” the hagiographer proceeds to strongly oppose all who sow anxiety and false doctrine. The inspired author believes that those who teach what shouldn’t be taught are above all Jews (the circumcised), who teach only for “sordid gain” mislead the faithful and are preoccupied with “Jewish myths” (verse 14) and admonishments of people who reject the truth. This expression by the inspired author is very important because it exposes the aim of the heretics’ activity and the content of their admonishments.²⁸ The aim of false doctrine is solely material gain, because false doctrine cannot have any religious value. As has been said above, legends

28 Cf. R. Pindel, *Magia czy Ewangelia. Konfrontacja głosicieli Ewangelii ze światem magicznym w ujęciu Dziejów Apostolskich*, Kraków 2003, p. 336.

(μῦθος) are only the product of human fantasy, not of Divine revelation, just like the dictates created by people who reject the truth and thus turn towards falsehood. This image of people preaching false doctrine presented by the hagiographer demands a "sharp admonishment" on Titus' part (Titus 1 : 13).²⁹ This does not mean a complete rejection of these bad teachers, but the aim that the hagiographer departs on Titus: that of keeping the "sound faith" (ὕγιαινούση πίστις). Reprimanding and admonishing as well as exposing the aim and contents of false doctrine are intended to convert all to the one sound faith, which is a key requirement for the unity of the Church. Only the sound faith that Titus is to promote is a fundament that unites people who believe in Jesus. Myths, false dictates, and pseudo-kerygma focused on material gain will never be capable of uniting human hearts and minds. Only sound doctrine and sound words can lead one to sound faith in the Church.

The "sound doctrine" (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) that Titus is supposed to preach (Titus 2 : 1) leads to the "sound faith" (ὕγιαινούση πίστις) of people from various sectors of society. This is very important because when the hagiographer instructs Titus he does not speak of myths, dictates, or the material gain of the preachers like he does several verses earlier (Titus 1 : 13), but he speaks about the proper lifestyle of all the members of the Church. Therefore, at this point we have a permanent element of instruction that leads to unity in "sound doctrine," which is God's truth revealed through moral behavior. Sound faith of the latter variety is imagined as the saintly behavior of every person, regardless of his or her age, social role, or wealth (Titus 2 : 2).³⁰ Titus receives his instruction about "sound faith" in the context of the older men (πρεσβύτες) who are supposed to be marked by noble love and patience. Sobriety, stability, and prudence should be traits of such people. Older women (πρεσβῦτις) also receive specific guidelines related to their lifestyles (verse 3). Above all, they have to be modest, restrained, sober and capable of teaching about good and avoid gossip and slander. They should form young women, love their husbands and children, and be judicious, pure, thrifty, and meek (verse 4). The hagiographer also demands moderation of young men (verse 5). In both verses 4 and 5, the inspired author uses the term νέος, which describes young wealth women and young men. More attention is clearly given to

29 Cf. C. S. Keener, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Nowego Testamentu*, Warszawa 2000, p. 492.

30 Cf. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul a critical life*, Oxford–New York 1997, p. 365.

women, both young and old, whose duties are decidedly more developed compared to the social and family obligations of men.

The instruction to maintain “sound faith” (ὕγιαινούση πίστις), as one was able to see on the basis of the exegetical development of the Letter to Titus, is addressed first to people who do not follow the instructions of the genuine faith and are instead influenced by the myths and dictates of those who reject the truth. This is a very interesting statement by the hagiographer, who zooms in on the most essential element of “sound faith”: that of the relationship between man’s mind and the truth. Thus sound faith is based on a truth that is not invented by some human mind, but is found to be revealed by the Lord. In the world of the heretics’ myths and dictates, Titus and all the other must cling to the truth about “sound faith.” However, “sound faith” is not detached from the life of people in a family community or in society. The Epistle to Titus therefore brings guidelines related to sound morality that result from proper convictions and apostolic guidelines. “Sound faith” is therefore inextricably tied to morality in one’s everyday life.

Conclusions

The inspired author of the pastoral epistles perfectly explained to the bishops Timothy and Titus the most important factor that brings together believers in Jesus: “sound doctrine.” However, during the time of the apostles such teaching was threatened “from the inside” by imprudent guides who did not deal with the important parts of Jesus’ teaching, but with “myths and genealogies,” thus pushing people away from Jesus and His works. Likewise, some of the believers in the Church looked for teachers who preached exactly what the faithful wanted to hear. In both cases we do not deal with the words of God who speaks to His people, but with the fantastic imagination of the speaker or with the unsound curiosity of the listener. Timothy and Titus bear responsibility for their words and for the training of teachers who must preach what is consistent with “sound doctrine.” Today’s threats to the unity of believers in Jesus also encompass errors in moral attitudes. “Sound doctrine” deals not only with the essence of teaching about God, but also in the proper behavior of the people of the Church. The long list of sins that completely contradict “sound doctrine” requires Timothy and Titus to take concrete steps and preach the true doctrine of human morality. Both these factors of teaching the truth

of the Gospel and moral behavior are the axis of understanding for all people who listen to Jesus and act in accordance with His word.

In light of these conclusions, the Church's "sound doctrine" must above all be based on truth about God and man. The Church's worldly success cannot be compared to other organizations that seek only temporary popularity. Like heresy, the desire for money, fame, and power always will damage the Church's unity. The second element of "sound doctrine" above all refers to proper formulation of "the word," whose origin is in Jesus, the Word Incarnate that is infallibly preached by the apostles and their successors. The Gospel is and will be a sound and simultaneously healing word, but it cannot be falsified through any false understanding or improper way of propagating it. The methods of preaching the Gospels should be adapted to the development of the minds of those who listen to it, but the essential message of the Gospels should never be "modified." "Sound words" must be given in a pure and unadulterated form to every generation of believers in a way that they can best understand it. The last element of "sound doctrine" that is a factor unifying the Church is one faith in Jesus as well as noble behavior in truth and in love. All the members of the Church are responsible for transmitting sound faith and moral behavior: priests and bishops, husbands and wives, parents and children, the old and the young, the free and the slaves.

In conclusion, we have to say that in light of the pastoral epistles of the Old Testament a very important factor in uniting the Church's members and their unity in thinking is "sound doctrine": authentic teaching (διδασκαλία), the real word (λόγος), and one faith (πίστις).

Abstract

"Sound doctrine" is an important factor binding Christians in the Pastoral Epistles

"Sound doctrine," present in the Pastoral Epistles, contains the most community-creating element that strengthens the communion of persons related to admonishment by the author of the inspired text directed at two Church leaders: Timothy and Titus. Both of them have the important task of caring for the "sound principles" among their subordinates, for pure doctrine that does not wander among unimportant matters, showing the most essential aims of human life and for increasing faith in Christ and His kingdom. The text of this article has been divided into three parts dealing with the adjective "sound": διδασκαλία – the entire moral teaching; λόγος – the words, by which the authentic truth of salvation is proclaimed; and πίστις, the belief that simultaneously transmits and inspires neighbors. They are a sum total of one "sound doctrine" of the apostolic Church strengthened through God's inspiration.

Keywords: sound doctrine; Pastoral Epistles; New Testament; unity

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