



“Meditate  
upon these things;  
give thyself  
wholly to them;  
that thy profiting  
may appear unto all”

I Timothy 4:15

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## THE PRIVATE CARE OF SOULS

In referring to the occupants of the office of the ministry, the German language has the very beautiful and appropriate word *Seelsorger*. Literally, this word describes the individual as "one who cares for souls." For want of an exact equivalent in the English language, the word is usually translated by *pastor*, or shepherd. A true *Seelsorger* is always looking for ways in which he can improve his ministry, so that the souls entrusted to his care may receive the very best that he is able to offer them. He recognizes that his duties do not end when he has publicly delivered a message from God's Word in the worship service, or instructed a Confirmation class, or conducted a Bible class. As a *Seelsorger* he knows that the true care of blood-bought souls requires his utmost concern also in private. Therefore, in an effort to help us all become ever more proficient in the private care of souls, we shall first of all present some basic facts to keep in mind, and then discuss several aspects of our private ministry to souls, in the hope of finding ways to improve the spiritual care we provide.

### I.

If the private care of souls is to be done properly, then every pastor should bear some basic facts in mind.

You are a shepherd. The Lord said to His people, "I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," Jer. 3:15. Again, "I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord," Jer. 23:4. You are a watchman. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me ..." Ezek. 3:17-21 and 33:7ff. You are an overseer. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," Acts 20:28. The holy writer wrote to the Hebrew Christians, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as



they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you," Heb. 13:17. Peter also exhorts the elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock," I Pet. 5:1-4. You are a laborer together with God, I Cor. 3:9.

From all of this it follows that it is your duty to learn to know the members of your congregation, not merely in a general sort of way, but individually. You are to watch over them faithfully. You are to work diligently for them in matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. For you will be required to give an accounting of this, Ezek. 3 and 33; Heb. 13:17.

As a Seelsorger, you will therefore conduct yourself toward the members of your congregation in such a way as to make it evident that you wish to bring every individual soul along with you into the mansions of heaven. "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," I Tim. 4:16.

Therefore in the private care of souls it is your duty to teach the ignorant, admonish the sinner, terrify those who are self-secure, show the right way to those who err, comfort the frightened, strengthen the weak, arouse the sluggish, win the stubborn, etc. In short, you are to show sinners the way of salvation.

Keep in mind that in this work you are nothing and can do nothing. It is God alone who can and will carry out this work. As Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me," I Cor. 15:10. In your nothingness, believe firmly in the Word of God: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness," II Cor. 12:9.

In the private care of souls, the Seelsorger should seek only God's honor and the salvation of men. In order that this two-fold goal may be attained, there are two

basic principles that should be followed: 1) Let only God's Word be applied in each situation; 2) Pray that Jesus Christ may fill your heart with His merciful love toward your church members, that you may truly be a "labourer together with God" to them.

Never seek your own, whether it be property or honor or good days or convenience. Paul wrote, "I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," Phil. 2:20-21. The Seelsorger should never say: What will I get out of it? Or: It doesn't bother me if I neglect this one or that one, for he has no influence and is unimportant in the congregation. You should rather say: Christ purchased also him with His blood, just as much as everyone else. Be ready to sacrifice your own personal convenience, whether it be by day or by night. Be like a candle which consumes itself while giving light to others.

Don't do more for those who are friendly to you than for those who are not friendly, or who even show a dislike for you. Don't give up if your faithful service does not bear fruit right away the first or second time. Don't start saying to yourself: Now I have done my duty and nothing more can be said. Continue to persevere. You don't know when God's hour will come. A tree doesn't fall with the first blow of the axe. Don't allow yourself to be guided by the fear or favor of men. Don't give the impression that people must believe and follow you, and don't be upset if they don't obey you. You should step back, and let God and His Word step forward.

Speak the truth to everyone, freely and openly, but always in love, without reservation, even when chastizing sin, as Nathan did to David, II Sam. 12. To chastize only halfway does more harm than good. Don't be hindered by fear of some evil consequences, but speak the truth lovingly and confidently, and then leave the results to the Lord.

Be ready to yield your rights to anyone, so long as you can do it with a good conscience. But never give up anything of God's Word. There you should stand fast like an iron wall and let God rule. For the sake of that Word be ready to suffer whatever may come.

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The Seelsorger must make allowances for different temperaments, abilities, circumstances, and personal prejudices. Just keep in mind how very many temptations your church members are exposed to as they go about their daily work in this unbelieving world.

Do not postpone a reprimand if you can settle the matter right away. In such cases, do not try to persuade them merely to say "Yes" with the mouth, but try to convince them to do so from the heart. The old writer Samuel Butler said, "He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still." Always make it clear that you hate the sin, but that you are seeking the betterment of the sinner. As far as his actual sins are concerned, you will do well to lead the sinner to the source of sin, namely, to the condition of his heart with its original sin. And then go on to show him how much he needs the Savior Jesus Christ. In this connection, always keep in mind the ten thousand talents which you yourself owe, and what great trouble God has with you, and yet how very patient He is, Matt. 18:23-25.

Do not say in a lazy manner: When I have opportunity or when it is more convenient, then I will speak to this or that person. Go to the person as soon as possible in an effort to settle the problem. At the same time, look for an opportunity that will be as convenient as possible for your church member, when he will be in a favorable position to talk. Be especially diligent in pursuing a situation, whenever possible, in order to raise up one who has fallen, calling a sinner to repentance. In Luke 15 the Good Shepherd left the ninety and nine and went after the one which was lost.

Let us close this section by referring to some examples in Scripture of the private care of souls. Paul tells of having applied the Word of God in individual circumstances. "Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," Acts 20:31. Recall how Paul spoke with Felix and his wife Drusilla concerning "righteousness and temperance and judgment to come," Acts 24:24-25. In writing to the Christians at Thessalonica Paul said, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged

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every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory," I Thess. 1:10ff. We need only mention how Jesus dealt with two of His own disciples: Peter after his three-fold denial of the Savior, Luke 22:61; and also Thomas after His resurrection, John 20:27. Just stop to think of all the individuals that Jesus dealt with during His earthly ministry as He showed the true love of a Shepherd for the souls of each and every one.

## II.

The pastor has an especially appropriate time and opportunity for the private care of souls in connection with Communion announcements. Unfortunately, this worthy old custom has gradually been falling into general disuse. As congregations become larger and more spread out, and as people busy themselves with many things, it appears impractical and difficult to set certain hours during which communicant members of the congregation may come and announce to the pastor their intention and desire to partake of the Lord's Supper the next Sunday. Instead of the pastor and individual members having an opportunity to sit down and visit on matters of mutual interest, the practice of Communion announcements has largely become a matter of signing a card and handing it to an usher, or signing a piece of paper as the individual comes to church. While this may serve the purpose of providing a record of who partook of the Sacrament, it deprives the pastor of yet another opportunity to be a true Seelsorger to his members. Let us consider briefly what we may be gaining by adopting the practice of more individualized Communion announcements.

If the proper relationship exists between the pastor and his sheep, then they will as a rule come gladly to announce for Communion. They will welcome the opportunity to talk with their pastor. If sincere Christians do not come gladly to announce, then it is seldom the case that the pastor is without blame.

During announcements do not conduct yourself as a judge, but rather consider yourself to be a physician and those making announcements to be your patients. Seek to learn how and where each individual may be lacking, and

then offer suitable medicine to each one from God's storehouse. We should keep in mind that a rough, insensitive doctor is not well-liked, even though he may be ever so capable. But when a physician, in a friendly manner, bandages a wound with a tender hand, he can even cut into bad sores and give bitter medicine, and through it all will receive the whole-hearted cooperation of his patient.

Here it is especially important that you should ask God for wisdom, in order that you may recognize what each individual needs and requires. By gently going into circumstances in a fatherly way, the Communion announcements may very well be of greater blessing for the communicant than the public sermon on Sunday morning.

A very important obligation here rests upon the pastor, for he must determine whether a person is worthy or unworthy to come to the Lord's Supper. Here keep in mind that you are not a lord, but merely a steward, and as such you are to give the holy Sacrament only to the worthy.

X Here you should be very careful that you do not deny the Lord's Supper to a weak and sick child of God, as though he were unworthy to receive it. When you deny it to a child of God, then you rob him of that which his Savior intended for him. You take from him the Bread of Life and, for all practical purposes, become his spiritual murderer.

Y At the same time, if you through thoughtlessness and carelessness permit an unworthy communicant to receive the Sacrament, so that he receives it to his damnation, then you become a partaker of his sin, I Cor. 11:29. You then become a murderer of his soul, not a caretaker of it. You give to the dog what belongs to the child, Matt. 7:6. You thereby say to the ungodly that he should live and not die (contrary to Ezek. 3:17-18). You strengthen him in his godlessness instead of helping him to repentance, II Tim. 2:25-26. You loose what you should bind, contrary to the Ministry of the Keys. You are supposed to watch over his soul, Heb. 13:17; but instead you become a dumb dog that cannot bark, Isa. 56:10. You should help him out of sin and rescue him from eternal damnation, but you only plunge him deeper therein.

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Therefore look to see whom you have before you, and make use of the opportunity to explore his spiritual condition. In general, one might mention the following areas as being necessary matters according to which we might explore the spiritual condition of individuals: a) whether he believes that the Bible is the Word of God; b) whether he knows the teachings basic to salvation; c) whether he recognizes himself as a sinner, repents of sin, and wishes that to be known; d) whether he is not reconciled to someone; e) whether he believes that he receives Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper; f) whether he desires it for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith; g) whether, in the case of a visitor, he shares our confessional position. You will surely wish to make use of the opportunity to strengthen the young people in the teachings of the Catechism and to warn them against youthful sins.

When you as a pastor know the members of your church, then it surely is not necessary to explore every one every time. When receiving announcements, avoid having an officious look on your face. Do not make the examination a form of torture. Rather, if you are wise, you will examine people (especially the despondent, the strangers, and the timid) in such a way that they will scarcely notice that they are being examined. Do not ask if he has done this or that particular sin, unless a strong rumor has been making the rounds about him to that effect. If he asserts his innocence, then believe him and not the rumor. In ministering to those who are despondent and weak in the faith, extol the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper, so that they may find in it true comfort and strengthening of their faith. If someone is opposed to this practice of Communion announcements due to a lack of understanding, with the result that he does not come to the Lord's Supper, then you should go to him in his house.

It is very difficult to accomplish much with people who have a closed heart. When dealing with such people, you will usually sigh when you have good reason to suspect that they are Christians in name only. But if you are unable to show that to them from their life, then believe their words and not your suspicions. God knows what is in their hearts and He will make no mistake.

(To be continued) \_ \_

A. Schulz

THE GREEK ARTICLE  
AND THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S DEITY

(Part VI)

We come at length to the conclusion of the first major section of our topic, that which concerns the Rule of Granville Sharp. By now the reader has surely become familiar with this canon of grammar:

*When two personal nouns of the same case are connected by the copulative καί (and), if the former has the definite article, and the latter has not, they both relate to the same person.*

As we have seen, proper names and nouns in the plural number are excluded from the application of the rule.

There are four passages which have been of particular interest to us, for according to Sharp's Rule they would serve as testimonies to the deity of Christ:

Ephesians 5:5 ... οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ (does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Him who is Christ and God).

2 Thessalonians 1:12 ... κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ).

Titus 2:13 ... προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (waiting for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus).

2 Peter 1:1 ... ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ).

It remains for us to present and discuss the views of several more grammarians and commentators with respect to the rule and exegetical conclusions of Granville Sharp.

The Grammarians (continued)

The influence of George Benedict Winer was long lasting, and much of the exegetical confusion surrounding the aforementioned passages can be traced to this grammarian.

In treating Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1, as we saw in the last issue of this *Journal*,<sup>1</sup> he departed from his customary grammatical rectitude. Although he clearly recognized that the syntax of the article in these passages favored Sharp's exegesis, he rejected it because he doubted that the apostles would have ascribed the name "God" to Jesus Christ. His weak attempt to justify his dogmatic exegesis on the basis of Greek usage has, unfortunately, been perpetuated by several succeeding grammarians and commentators.

BUTTMAN. Compare, for example, Alexander Buttman, who published *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* in the 1850's. In his first reference to Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1, he states: "It will probably never be possible, either in reference to profane literature or to the N.T., to bring down to rigid rules which have no exception, the inquiry when with several substantives connected by conjunctions the article is repeated, and when it is not. ... From this fact alone it follows, that in view of the subjective and arbitrary [?] treatment of the art. on the part of individual writers ..., it is very hazardous in particular cases to draw important inferences, affecting the sense or even of a doctrinal nature, from the single circumstance of the use or the omission of the article; see e.g. Tit. 11.13; ... 2 Pet. i.1."<sup>2</sup> In the discussion which follows (pp. 97-100), Buttman, like Winer, suggests that the presence and location of modifiers in these passages (ἡμῶν, etc.) make it possible for the writer to omit the second article, which he normally would have employed when referring to two separate persons. Thus, if one applies Buttman's principle, the τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ of Titus 2:13 could as well refer to both the Father ("the great God") and the Son ("and our Savior, Christ Jesus") -- rather than to only the Son ("our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus"). A similar result would occur in 2 Peter 1:1.

There is no need to enter into a lengthy refutation of this suggestion by Buttman, for this has already been done in connection with Winer.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it to state once more that the presence and location of genitives and other modifiers with either of the two nouns nowhere in the New Testament excludes a passage from the application of Sharp's Rule, so long as the basic pattern re-

mains: definite article + personal noun + καί + personal noun. Whenever the writers of the New Testament desired to speak of two persons, they either omitted the article before both nouns or inserted it before both.

GILDERSLEEVE. This great grammarian of classical Greek is remembered especially for his work on the doctrine of the article. In the second part of his *Syntax*, published in 1911, he states: "Repetition and Non-repetition of the Article. The article may be common to a number of copulated substantives, even when they are of different genders or numbers, or it may be repeated with each member. Theoretically the repetition compels a separate consideration while the omission suggests unity. Practically the Greeks were almost as loose as we are prone to be, and a sharp difference cannot be made."<sup>4</sup> Gildersleeve offers no illustration of Sharp's Rule, but of the many citations which he does present only one goes contrary to it, namely, the following passage from Sophocles' *Electra*: ἐν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ἐστὶν ἡ προηθία / καὶ τῷ λέγοντι καὶ κλύοντι σύμμαχος (In such affairs, forethought is helpful, both for him that speaks and for him that listens). It is not surprising that the author of this passage has not employed a second article, even though the two participles refer to two distinct persons. Metrical considerations could have prompted such omission, especially in a passage such as this where misunderstanding would not have been possible -- the one speaking and the one listening are obviously two different individuals. Bishop Middleton showed in some detail that classical usage, except in cases such as the foregoing, conforms to Sharp's Rule.<sup>5</sup> And we have seen that in the New Testament there are no exceptions at all to the rule!<sup>6</sup>

MOULTON. James Hope Moulton's *Prolegomena*, which first appeared in 1906, has had a rather profound influence upon all Greek grammars which have been published since. He declines to legislate on the "problem" of Titus 2:13, for as a grammarian he feels that he must leave the matter open. He does, however, offer significant evidence in support of Sharp's exegesis of both this passage and of 2 Peter 1:1: "But we might cite, for what they are worth, the papyri . . . , which attest the translation 'our great God and Saviour' as current among Greek-speaking Christians. . . . A curious echo is

found in the Ptolemaic formula applied to the deified kings ... One is not surprised to find that P. Wendland ... treats the rival rendering in Titus 2:13 [the finding of two persons rather than one] as 'an exegetical mistake,' like the severance of τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν and σωτήρος 'I. X. in 2 Peter 1:1. Familiarity with the everlasting apotheosis that flaunts itself in the papyri and inscriptions of Ptolemaic and Imperial times, lends strong support to Wendland's contention that Christians, from the latter part of i/A.D. [the first century A.D.] onward, deliberately annexed for their Divine Master the phraseology that was impiously arrogated to themselves by some of the worst of men" (namely, the Roman emperors).<sup>7</sup> Moulton would not have hesitated to understand the passages in Titus and 2 Peter as testimonies to the deity of Christ.

ROBERTSON. A. T. Robertson's *Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament* was published in 1908. In this volume he fully supports Sharp's exegesis of 2 Peter 1:1: "... in 2 Pet. 1:11 (and also 2:20; 3:18) we have τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Here the one article definitely shows Jesus Christ to be both our Lord and Savior. Hence in 2 Pet. 1:1 τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ the article likewise means that Christ is our God and Savior."<sup>8</sup> He finds a similar force for the single article in Titus 2:13.

In 1921 Robertson produced an article for the *Expositor* magazine, in which he strongly defends the validity of Sharp's Rule and of his exegesis of Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1. "He [Sharp] laid down a 'rule' which has become famous and the occasion of sharp contention, but which is still a sound and scientific principle ... Sharp stands vindicated after all the dust has settled. We must let these passages mean what they want to mean, regardless of our theories about the theology of the writers" (Robertson refers here to the theological bias of Winer and others like him).<sup>9</sup>

That Robertson continued to hold to this strong opinion appears from his monumental *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, for in the fourth edition of this work, published in 1923, he still defended the use of 2 Peter 1:1 and Titus 2:13 as witnesses to the deity of Christ. He comments here also

on the other two passages we are considering, 2 Thessalonians 1:12 and Ephesians 5:5: "One person may be described in these ... examples, but they are not so clear as the type τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος (2 Pet. 1:1, 11)."<sup>10</sup> The reason given by Robertson for this hesitancy is that both θεός and κύριος are often without the article in the New Testament. The omission of a second article in the passages from 2 Thessalonians and Ephesians may therefore not be significant. This concern of Robertson has already been considered in previous articles of this series, where this present writer has indicated his feeling that the weight of evidence is nevertheless in favor of Sharp's exegesis of Ephesians 5:5 and 2 Thessalonians 1:12: "in the kingdom of Him who is the Christ and God" and "according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup>

DANA and MANTEY. In their *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, first published in 1927, these joint authors state that Sharp's Rule "still proves to be true," and they continue with the following defense of his exegesis: "So in 2 Pt. 1:1 τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ means that Jesus is our God and Savior. After the same manner Tit. 2:13, τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, asserts that Jesus is the great God and Savior."<sup>12</sup>

METZGER. In 1953 Bruce Metzger, a well-known scholar of the Greek New Testament, wrote an article entitled "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ," in which he cites Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 against the antitrinitarian view of this sect. He regards Sharp's Rule as fully valid, and as applicable to these passages.<sup>13</sup>

MOULE. C. F. D. Moule, a theological professor at the University of Cambridge in England, discusses the exegesis of Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 in his *Idiom Book*, first published in 1953. After citing several alternate interpretations which he regards as possible, he concludes: "It is probable that in both these instances the article has been correctly omitted and that τοῦ (μεγάλου) θεοῦ is intended to apply to Jesus."<sup>14</sup>

BLASS-DEBRUNNER-FUNK. Few grammars have gone through so long a series of editions as this one. The first edition appeared in 1896, and an English translation of the ninth and tenth German editions was published in 1961. In

the paragraph "The Article with Two or More Substantives connected by καί," the authors first state, quite correctly: "The article is (naturally) omitted with the second of two phrases in apposition connected by καί," and they cite Titus 2:13 as an example. Apparently they would refer both nouns, God and Savior, to Jesus Christ. But then they cite 2 Peter 1:1, and state: "however ὡς ἑἷς ἦν. Ἰ. Χρ. may be taken by itself and separated from the preceding."<sup>15</sup> In support of this assertion they point to a preceding paragraph in their grammar for examples. An examination of that paragraph, however, reveals not a single exception to Sharp's Rule!

TURNER. Nigel Turner in 1962 completed his work on the third volume of the Moulton series, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. He there states: "One must look critically at the common view that in Titus 2:13 we have two clauses in apposition ... The same is true of 2 Peter 1:1 ... In Hell., and indeed for practical purposes in class. Greek the repetition of the art. was not strictly necessary to ensure that the items be considered separately. The relevant consideration on the other side is that the phrase *God and Savior* in contemporary language referred to only one person, c. A.D. 100. Moreover, the art. could have been repeated to avoid misunderstanding if separate individuals had been intended."<sup>16</sup> In general it might indeed be said that the repetition of the article was not strictly necessary to ensure that the items be considered separately. But this general principle, as has been shown earlier in the present series of articles, does not hold when the "items" in question are nouns of personal description in the singular number. In such cases the omission of the second article is for us a definite indication that both nouns are to be referred to the same person. To this there is no demonstrable exception in the entire New Testament. This usage was very common also among the classical writers.

In his useful little volume entitled *Grammatical Insights Into the New Testament* (1965), Turner supports, although guardedly, Sharp's exegesis of all four passages: "Another controversial passage is Tit. 2:13, where in its text the N.E.B. happily adopts the entirely natural translation, 'our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This way of reading the Greek has the support of most of the early Greek fathers as well as great names in more

recent times: Ellicott, Bernard Weiss, Christopher Wordsworth, and R.V. (text). . . . The same grammatical principle affects the phrase in II Peter 1:1 where there is but one definite article linking the two parts of a single phrase, 'Our God even Jesus Christ.' . . . And what then of II Thess. 1:12? 'Our Lord and God Jesus Christ' would be the correct rendering. We must also seriously consider the possibility of departing from all our English versions by translating Eph. 5:5, 'in the kingdom of Christ who is God.'<sup>17</sup> While Turner seems inclined to support the principle of grammar defended by Sharp, he does hedge somewhat: "Unfortunately, at this period of Greek we cannot be sure that such a rule is really decisive."<sup>18</sup> This statement seems overly cautious, in view of the fact that Sharp's Rule, limited as it is to nouns of personal description in the singular number, is vindicated by both classical and New Testament Greek. And it should be remembered that in its usage of the article, the Greek of the New Testament is closer to the classical than to the general Koine.<sup>19</sup> It would be of little significance, therefore, if in fact some of the extant papyri did present genuine exceptions to Sharp's Rule.

### The Commentaries

Space limitations will hardly permit a complete overview of the commentaries on the four passages which we are considering. The citations will, therefore, be restricted to only a few of them. Nor have the page numbers been indicated in the footnotes, for in the case of commentaries the references can be readily located.

INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY. On Ephesians 5:5, T. K. Abbott argues against Sharp's exegesis for the following reasons: 1) θεός is one of the words that do not require an article; 2) there is in the context no dogmatic assertion about Christ, and to introduce such a prediction [*sic*] in this incidental way would be out of place; and 3) the apostle's language elsewhere would not lead us to suppose that he would call Christ "God." In citing passages in support of his first argument, Abbott offers none that would demonstrate that Sharp's Rule can not be applied to this verse. The non-use of the article before θεός in those which he cites can in each case be explained in terms of other grammatical principles. The second argument bears little weight,

for it can be argued also that it would be appropriate for Paul to add here that the kingdom of which he is speaking is that of Him who is both Christ and God -- this is the kingdom from which every idolatrous sinner shuts himself out! The third argument proves nothing about the apostle's language in this verse. May Abbott (like Winer) actually be revealing a dogmatic bias at this point? Abbott would have done well, it seems, to have admitted that the unanimous testimony of the ancient Greek church was in favor of the interpretation which he rejects.<sup>20</sup>

James Everett Frame is the author of the ICC on the two epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. He states that some scholars have interpreted the passage "Jesus Christ, our God and Lord," but he himself prefers to distinguish between "our God" and "the Lord Jesus Christ." His reasons are 1) that ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν (not θεὸς ἡμῶν) is characteristic of our letters, and 2) that κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, without the article, is a fixed formula. Frame's first point is admittedly true, but it is difficult to see how it would indicate that we ought not apply Sharp's Rule to this passage. The second point indeed bears more weight, but in the opinion of this present writer it is not conclusive.<sup>21</sup>

In the ICC on Titus 2:13, Walter Lock presents an extended discussion on the phrase in question, and concludes that the holy writer is probably referring to only one person, and that one Jesus Christ. Among other things, he cites 1 Thess. 1:10 and 1 Cor. 1:7 in which Paul speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ on the last day. This would suggest that the words "the appearance of the glory of our great God" in our verse should likewise be referred to the Son, rather than to the Father.

Lock discusses also, and rightly rejects, the rather desperate suggestion of Hort and a few others that this verse be interpreted: "the appearing of him who is the glory of the great God and our Savior" -- that is, the appearing of Christ Jesus, who is the glory of the Father, the Father here being referred to as the great God and our Savior. This interpretation sets aside the easy and direct understanding: "the appearing of our God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Moreover, it overlooks the fact that Christ has Himself been called "our Savior" in verse

1:4 of this epistle. Beyond this, it goes contrary to the virtually unanimous testimony of the ancient church, which uniformly ascribes both titles, "the great God" and "Savior," to Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

The ICC supports Sharp's exegesis also in the passage 2 Peter 1:1. Charles Bigg urges the following in regard to the grammatical argument: "1. That the combination of the two substantives under one article is a very strong reason for regarding the two substantives as names of the same person. ... This point is rather strengthened than weakened by the addition of ἡμῶν to θεός. It must be admitted that if the author intended to distinguish two persons, he has expressed himself with singular inaccuracy. 2. If the author had intended to distinguish two persons, it is exceedingly doubtful whether he could have omitted the article before σωτήρος. ... 3. But what we have specially to regard is the usage not of other writers, but of 2 Peter. Five times the author uses σωτήρ, and always in very similar phrases. ... Though σωτήρ is one of his favourite words he never uses it alone, but always couples it under the same article with another name. There is strong reason for thinking that the two names always belong to the same person; undoubtedly they do so in four cases out of the five." (The five passages in 2 Peter to which Bigg refers are 1:1, 1:11, 2:20, 3:2, and 3:18. If in the last four the two nouns clearly refer to the same person, why not also in verse 1:1?) Bigg's entire discussion is worth a careful reading. This writer especially likes his insistence that theological considerations must not be permitted to overthrow the strict grammatical rendering: "... the first and sovereign duty of the commentator is to ascertain, and to guide himself by the grammatical sense."

LENSKI. R. C. H. Lenski clearly agrees with the principle enunciated by Sharp, even though he does not refer to Sharp's Rule by name. And he applies the principle consistently to all four of our passages. He too pleads for the grammatical sense, and rightly affirms that dogmatic interests must not be permitted to control one's exegesis. (We wish that Lenski would have followed this excellent rule in the passages of the New Testament which treat such doctrines as universal justification, conversion, and predestination.) Regarding 2 Thessalonians 1:12, Lenski states: "The only thread on which

objection could be hung is the fact that  $\kappa\upsilon\omicron\rho\omicron\varsigma$  without the article is often used as a proper name, and this thread is rather weak." He has no such reservations in regard to the other three passages. On 2 Peter 1:1, for example, he says: "The effort to find here a reference to two persons, God and Christ, is nullified linguistically by the use of but one article in the Greek. There is nothing more to say. Here the deity of Christ stands forth as a mountain that no false faith can plunge into the sea." Concerning the exegete who would deny the clear grammatical sense of this passage Lenski says: "... he suffers from a blind dogmatism, that, like the old Jewish Sanhedrin, is determined to deny the deity of Christ at every price."

### Conclusions

After so long a discussion of Sharp's Rule and exegesis, extending over six issues of this *Journal*, the conclusions can surely be concise. This writer, first, regards Sharp's Rule as a valid principle of Greek grammar, inasmuch as it agrees with general classical usage and is found to be without demonstrable exception in the entire New Testament. Secondly, he would accept all four passages as testimonies to Christ's deity. In his opinion, it is a grammatically necessary and therefore thoroughly sound exegetical conclusion that only one person, Jesus Christ, is referred to in the passages from Titus and 2 Peter. The grammatical case for a similar interpretation of Ephesians 5:5 is only slightly less strong, and the uniform testimony of the Greek fathers in support of Sharp's exegesis should be conclusive. And while this writer must admit that a valid grammatical question can be raised in regard to the  $\kappa\upsilon\omicron\rho\omicron\varsigma$  of 2 Thessalonians 1:12, yet he feels that a good case can nevertheless be made for the translation "our God and Lord, Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 could well be added to our list of proof texts for the deity of Christ, and probably also Ephesians 5:5. Because of the question concerning the passage from 2 Thessalonians, however, we would do well not to use it as a *sedes doctrinae*.

It is interesting to note how several of the modern translations have rendered the four verses. The following have adopted Sharp's exegesis in the indicated passages: Beck (*The New Testament in the Language of Today*)

apparently in all four passages; the *Berkeley Version* and the *NASB* in Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, and apparently also Ephesians 5:5; the *RSV*, *NEB*, *The Living Bible*, *Today's English Version*, the *King James II Version*, and the *New International Version* in Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1; and Phillips in none of the passages.

God willing, the next issue will present the second major section of this series on the Greek article and the doctrine of Christ's deity. It will discuss in particular Colwell's Rule and the exegesis of John 1:1. The reader will be relieved to learn that this second section will not be as lengthy as the first!

C. Kuehne

#### FOOTNOTES

1. *Journal of Theology*, September, 1974, pp. 28-31.
2. Alexander Buttmann, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1895), p. 97. Buttmann's description of the treatment of the article by the holy writers as being "subjective and arbitrary" must be questioned. Cf. *Journal of Theology*, December, 1973, p. 23; June, 1974, p. 24f.
3. *Journal of Theology*, September, 1974, p. 28f.; cf. also pp. 26-28.
4. Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes*, Second Part (New York: American Book Company, c. 1911), p. 277. The looseness of which Gildersleeve speaks has to do with the use or non-use of the article with personal nouns in the plural number, nouns relating to things or qualities, and proper names. He nowhere demonstrates a looseness in the usage covered by Sharp's Rule. On the whole situation with respect to the New Testament, cf. *Journal of Theology*, December, 1973, pp. 17-26; also September, 1973, pp. 18-25.
5. Cf. *Journal of Theology*, September, 1974, p. 22f.
6. *Ibid.*, December, 1973, pp. 23-26.
7. James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Vol. I Prolegomena, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), p. 84.
8. A. T. Robertson, *A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, c. 1908), p. 75.
9. A. T. Robertson, "The Greek Article and the Deity of Christ," *Expositor* (London), series VIII, No. 21 (1921),

- pp. 183, 187.
10. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, c. 1934), p. 786.
  11. *Journal of Theology*, December, 1973, pp. 26-28; September, 1974, pp. 24-26.
  12. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Macmillan, c. 1955), p. 147.
  13. *Theology Today*, vol. X, no. 1 (April, 1953), p. 79.
  14. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 110.
  15. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, trans. and rev. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1961), p. 144f.
  16. James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Vol. III Syntax, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 181.
  17. Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights Into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), p. 15f.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
  19. Cf. Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 754; Moulton, *Grammar*, vol. I, p. 80f., and vol. III, p. 165. (Editions cited previously in these footnotes.)
  20. Cf. *Journal of Theology*, March, 1974, p. 14f.
  21. *Ibid.*, September, 1974, p. 25f.
  22. *Ibid.*, March, 1974, p. 17f. On Hort's suggestion, cf. also Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 109. He regards the suggestions as "ingenuous but highly improbable."



### THE REPENTANCE OF GOD

The following comments on the chief passages that mention the repentance of God are from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown,<sup>1</sup> and they are quite representative of many interpreters.

#### I.

GENESIS 6:6: "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." God cannot change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), but, by language suited to our nature and experience, he is described as about to alter His visible procedure towards mankind -- from being merciful and longsuffering, he was about to

show Himself a God of judgment; and, as that impious race had filled up the measure of their iniquities, He was about to introduce a terrible display of His justice (Eccl. 8:11).

1 SAMUEL 15:11: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king." Repentance in Scripture is attributed to Him when bad men give Him cause to alter His course and method of procedure and to treat them as if He did "repent" of kindness shown.

2 SAMUEL 24:16: "When the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said ... It is enough." God is often described in Scripture as repenting when He ceased to pursue a course He had begun.

PSALM 90:13: "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants." A strong figure as in Ex. 32:12 ("Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people."), imploring a change in His dealings. (Cf. Leupold: "Turn back, O Lord! How long wilt Thou delay? And take pity upon Thy servants.")<sup>2</sup>

JEREMIAH 18:8: "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." God here adapts Himself to human conceptions. The change is not in God, but in the circumstances that regulate God's dealings, just as we say the land recedes from us when we sail forth, whereas it is we who recede from the land. God's unchangeable principle is to do the best that can be done under all circumstances; if then He did not take into account the moral change in His people, their prayers, etc., He would not be acting according to His own unchanging principle.

JEREMIAH 26:3: "If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings." ("Then I will relent." NEB) "If so be" -- expressed according to human conceptions; not as if God did not foreknow all contingencies, but to mark the obstinacy of the people and the difficulty of healing them, and to show his own goodness.

AMOS 7:3.6: "The Lord repented for this (prayer, v.2)." The change is not in God but in the effect outwardly. God unchangeably does what is just; it is just that He should hear intercessory prayer, as it would have been just for Him to have let judgment take its course at once on the guilty nation, but for the prayer of one or two righteous men in it. The repentance of the sinner, and God's regard to His own attributes of mercy and covenanted love, also cause God outwardly to deal with him as if He repented, whereas the change in outward dealing is in strictest harmony with God's own unchangeableness.

JONAH 3:10: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented<sup>o</sup> of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." When they repented, the position in which they stood towards God's righteousness was altered. So God's mode of dealing with them must alter accordingly, if God is not to be inconsistent with His own immutable character of dealing with men according to their works and state of heart. What was really a change in them and in God's corresponding dealings is, in condescension to human conceptions, represented as a change in God, Who in His essential righteousness and mercy, changeth not.

ZECHARIAH 8:14: "... and I repented not." "I changed not my purpose, because they changed not their mind." If the threatened punishment has been unchangeably inflicted, much more surely will God give the promised blessing, which is so much more consonant to His nature.

HOSEA 11:8: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? ... mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." God speaks according to human modes of thought. God's seeming change is in accordance with His secret, everlasting purpose of love to His people, to magnify His grace after their desperate rebellion.

## II.

For the sheer delight of his writing, as well as for the immediate availability of it to the reader, we quote Luther on Genesis 6:6: (*American Edition, Vol. 2, pp. 43ff*)

"But here another question is raised. Moses says: 'God saw that all the thoughts of man were evil.' Likewise: 'and He was sorry that He had made man.' Now if God foresees everything, why does Moses say that God saw only now? If God is wise, how can it happen that He repents of something He did? Why did He not see this sin or this corrupt nature of man from the beginning of the world? Why does Scripture attribute to God a temporal will, vision, and counsel in this manner? Are not God's counsels eternal and ἀμετανοήτα (Rom. 2: 5), so that He cannot repent of them? Similar statements occur in the prophets, where God threatens punishments, as in the case of the Ninevites. Nevertheless, He pardons those who repent.

"To this question the scholastics have nothing else to reply than that Scripture is speaking in human fashion, and therefore such actions are attributed to God by some figure of speech. They carry on discussions about a twofold will of God: 'the will of His sign' and 'the will of His good pleasure.' They maintain that 'the will of His good pleasure' is uniform and unchangeable, but the 'the will of His sign' is changeable; for He changes the signs when He wishes. Thus He did away with circumcision, instituted Baptism, etc., although the same 'will of good pleasure,' which had been predetermined from eternity, continued in force.

"I do not condemn this opinion; but it seems to me that there is a less complicated explanation, namely, that Holy Scripture is describing the thinking of those men who are in the ministry. When Moses says that God sees and repents, these actions really occur in the hearts of the men who carry on the ministry of the Word. Similarly, when he said above: 'My Spirit will not judge among men,' he is not speaking directly of the Holy Spirit as He is in His own essential nature or of the Divine Majesty, but of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Noah, Methuselah, and Lamech, that is, of the Spirit of God as He is carrying on His office and administering the Word through His saints.

"It is in this manner that God saw human wickedness and repented. That is, Noah, who had the Holy Spirit and was a minister of the Word, saw the wickedness of

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men and through the Holy Spirit was moved to grief when he observed this situation. Paul also similarly declares (Eph. 4:30) that the Holy Spirit is grieved in the godly by the ungodliness and wickedness of the ungodly. Because Noah is a faithful minister of the Word and the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit Moses correctly states that the Holy Spirit is grieving when Noah grieves and wishes that man would rather not be in existence than be so evil.

"Therefore the meaning is not that God from eternity had not seen these conditions; He sees everything from eternity. But since this wickedness of man now manifests itself with the utmost violence, God now discloses this wickedness in the hearts of His ministers and prophets.

"Thus God is immutable and unchanging in His counsel from eternity. He sees and knows all things; but He does not reveal them to the godly except at His own fixed time, so that they themselves may see them too. This seems to me to be the simplest meaning of this passage, and Augustine's interpretation differs little from it.

"I follow this general rule: to avoid as much as possible any questions that carry us to the throne of the Supreme Majesty. It is better and safer to stay at the manger of Christ the Man. For there is very great danger in involving oneself in the mazes of the Divine Being.

"To this passage belong others that are similar; in them God is depicted as though He had eyes, ears, a mouth, a nose, hands, and feet, the way Isaiah, Daniel, and the other prophets saw Him in their visions. In such passages Scripture speaks about God no differently from the way it speaks about a human being. Because the Anthropomorphites assigned human form to the Divine Being they were found guilty of heresy. <sup>3</sup>

"If the Anthropomorphites had so crude a conception, they deserved to be found guilty; for they were manifestly in error. As Christ states (Luke 24:39), a spirit has no flesh and bones. I rather incline to the opinion that the Anthropomorphites had in mind some

method of imparting doctrine to the simple. God in His essence is altogether unknowable; nor is it possible to define or put into words what He is, though we burst in the effort.

"It is for this reason that God lowers Himself to the level of our weak comprehension and presents Himself to us in images, in coverings, as it were, in simplicity adapted to a child, that in some measure it may be possible for Him to be known by us. Thus the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16), not because He is a dove. Yet in that simple form He wanted to be known, received, and worshipped; for He was truly the Holy Spirit. Likewise, in the same passages, even though no one will maintain that God the Father was the voice sounding from heaven, He nevertheless had to be received and worshipped in this simple image.

"That Scripture thus assigns to God the form, voice, actions, emotions, etc., of a human being not only serves to show consideration for the uneducated and the weak; but we great and learned men, who are versed in the Scriptures, are also obliged to adopt these simple images, because God has presented them to us and has revealed Himself to us through them. Similarly, the angels also appear in human form, although it is an established fact that they are altogether spirits. But we are unable to recognize spirits when they present themselves as spirits; images, however, we recognize.

"This is the simplest procedure for dealing with passages of this kind, for we cannot define what God is in His nature. Yet we can define what He is not, namely, that He is not a voice, not a dove, not water, not bread, and not wine. Nevertheless, He presents Himself to us in these visible forms, deals with us, and puts these forms before us to keep us from degenerating into erratic and vagabond spirits who indeed carry on discussions about God but are profoundly ignorant of Him as of One who cannot be comprehended in His unveiled majesty. God sees that this way of knowing God is impossible for us; for, as Scripture states (1 Tim. 6:16), He dwells in unapproachable light, and He has made known what we can grasp and understand. Those who adhere to this truly understand God; while those

who boast of visions, revelations, and enlightenments and follow them are either overwhelmed by God's majesty or remain in utter ignorance of God.

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"The addition in the text -- 'The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth' -- I regard as an anti-theetical statement. God is thinking, not of man on the earth, who is subject to sin and death, but of the heavenly being who is the lord of sin and death. God is indicating that He loves this man, but the earthly one He hates and contemplates destroying."

### III.

For further light on Jeremiah 18:8 and 10 and "repent" used by God, read the context, vv. 7-23. Here "repent" can hardly be explained as by Luther, a projection to God of the feelings of His preachers. Dummelow comments: "Predictions of good or evil were conditional on the moral state of those addressed." There was no change in God. Yet the prerogative of God to change His mind is defended in vv. 1-6 of the same chapter. It is aptly summarized in the comments on verse 4 in Laetsch: "The vessel in the hands of the potter was marred in the making. We are not told the cause. That is not the point of the lesson. The real point is that the potter can do as he pleases with the clay on which he works; discard it after an accident, or finish the marred vessel, or make an entirely new vessel out of the clay, one like the former one or one altogether different, exactly as seems good and right to him. The clay in his hand is in his power." <sup>4</sup> Then Laetsch adds, re vv. 7-10, "Yet the Lord, though an absolute Ruler of the nations, is not an arbitrary God, ruled by sudden whims or fancies. He remains the God of unchanging justice (Ex. 20:5-6)."<sup>5</sup>

There is an interesting record of God's "repenting" which ought to be considered by those who have called God an arbitrary "bully" (it has been done!) -- a "repentance" in the direction of salvation, in Ezekiel 20: 1-44.

Never is "repentance" predicated of God in the sense of *μετάνοια* or *μετανοέω*, which is almost always used of repentance for sin or evil. Of God, the word is *ἀμετα-*

μέλητος, unregretted, without change of purpose. Romans 11:29: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" -- ἀμεταμέλητα, not ἀμετανόητα. God does not change His mind, is not sorry for His gifts to and calling of the Jews. The former word refers to change of purpose, coming from μέλω. The gifts and calling of God are never taken back (Williams); God never changes His mind (Beck) are two versions of Romans 11:29.

Likewise, in Hebrews 7:21 ("The Lord sware and will not repent") the word form is from μεταμέλομαι-- no reference to change from evil, but to change in plans, mind, and purpose. Again, the root word is μέλω.

Summary thought: what is called the "repentance" of God in the Old Testament is a shifting of approach because of men's sinful reactions to God's doings -- for the very purpose that His plans and purposes shall be carried out, as often found especially in the first half of Ezekiel: "that they may know that I am the Lord," busy with salvation plans.

The "repentance" of God turns out to be an anthropomorphism, which also Luther argues for despite his shot at the scholastics and his own insightful "less complicated explanation." In his commentary on Genesis 1:2 he says:

"A papal decree condemns the Anthropomorphites for speaking about God as if they were speaking about a human being, and for ascribing to Him eyes, ears, arms, etc. However, the condemnation is unjust. Indeed, how could men speak otherwise of God among men? If it is heresy to think of God in this manner, then a verdict has been rendered concerning the salvation of all children, who think and speak of God in this childlike fashion. But even apart from the children: give me the most learned doctor -- how else will he teach and speak about God?"<sup>6</sup>

Luther said in our longer quotation that all references to "repentance" in God belong among these anthropomorphisms.

#### IV.

One gets the feeling that there is more to all this than to simplify it all to anthropomorphism. The Hebrew verb NACHAM seems to have some openings into connotations. Our lexicon gives: to have compassion, to pity, to grieve,

to be sorry, to comfort oneself, before it enters: to feel repentance, and then: to take vengeance. Remember that Luther, as it were, projects the feelings of God's preachers to God, as his "less complicated explanation." He presents this more as Moses' feeling than God's (God acting as to fact, Moses expressing the feeling). Or is this just the way of arriving at anthropomorphism?

To say that language is also psychological would be an understatement. Note: the sin of man puts God into stress because His nature is love. God is tense and uncomfortable when He must show justice, which is not "natural" to Him. When God must do the just thing (which is so contrary to His love), He is comforted, eased, the tension being removed. God would change His short-term plans in the face of disobedience, that is, He would "repent" and be eased, relieved of the necessity of punishing such disobedience and rebellion; He would also be eased and comforted if He punished -- and we, together with Luther, would abide under God's "signs" and inquire no further, for there is no way for us to know the inscrutable. There is relaxation in God, whether by stopping evil being done by men, or by this that He does not carry out His threat to punish. God is Love, and that essential attribute must prevail -- even, we might add, at the cost of tension that must be relieved at the price of executing punishment upon sinful men. God was comforted, we know, in the incident of Genesis 6:6, for NACHAM says so. There was no "moral" change in God there, of course. He did, however, adopt new "signs": deluge, ark, and Shem, to name the crucial ones.

God could not be made to change His mind with respect to Melchizedec (Christ) in Hebrews 7:21: "The Lord sware and will not repent (μεταμελήθησεται), Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." Nothing in connection with sending the Son into our flesh causes tension that needs relief: it all fits so admirably into God's kindness and mercy.

There is another finding that we must share with you. In Ezekiel 14 there comes in a negative way an understanding of the word we are studying. In verse 22: "... ye shall be comforted (NACHAM) concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem ..." The chapter eliminates the good-man argument as a reason for any change in God's

doings. Verse 14: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." Comfort, relief of tension, turning, change, came in connection with 1) the remnant returning, and 2) the justice of God's doing what He had to do "not without cause." Cf. v. 23; also all of chapter 14.

In yet another passage, God rejects the good-man argument, in Jeremiah 15, especially vv. 1-6. Verse 5 has the normal word for showing pity (CHAMAL); but in verse 6 there is our word NACHAM -- God is tired of going through the process of relieving Himself of the tension in Him which they have been causing. It seems that we can understand this climaxing only in terms of the hardening of hearts in Israel. In this chapter (15), do not miss God's message to Jeremiah after his severe complaint, vv. 15-21.

Let us apply what we have learned about NACHAM to ourselves: change of attitude leads to relaxation, comfort, even as confession, repentance, is good for the soul. In other words, to repent is to experience relief from tension: 1) in our case, from doing wrong; 2) in God's case, from doing what He must do when He is disobeyed. In all cases: comfort. The feeling-full sense of the word comes out fully at the end of the Joseph-scene in Genesis 50, especially v. 21: "Now therefore fear ye not; I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted (NACHAM) them and spake kindly unto them."

"Repent" is not the word for the places where it is used in the King James. Repentance is not the Winter-garment Fitzgerald called it in *The Rubaiyat*, stanza 7. The coloration of it hardly fits NACHAM in Scripture. When we must use the passages that have it, let us never fail to show it as the way to higher and greater good. In Genesis 6:6, God had to do something to stop the evil, piling heaven-high. The God of love must act even if stern measures were indicated: through Shem the Savior must come! And God Himself found comfort; though plans must change, His steadfast kindness did not!

*Martin Galstad*

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FOOTNOTES

1. R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House).
2. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of The Psalms* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1959), p. 647.
3. Cf. Vol. 1 of *Luther's Works* (American Edition), pp. 14-15, where Luther defends the Anthropomorphites.
4. Theo. Laetsch, *Bible Commentary: Jeremiah* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 168.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
6. *Luther's Works* (American Edition), Vol. 2, p. 14.

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*Editor's Note. Since the author's fourth part contains some new approaches not current among us, it is to be understood that the inclusion of them in our Journal does not constitute a commitment to them on the part of our editors. These are presented here for the study and consideration of our readers.*



A LOOK AT THE BACKGROUND OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD AND  
ITS APPLICATION TO CONDITIONS IN LUTHERANISM TODAY

In the closing years of his life Luther frequently referred to clouds he foresaw rising up on the horizon which boded evil for the Church, to which by God's grace through the Reformation the doctrine of the Apostles and the Prophets had been restored. He foresaw dangers from without and from within arising for the Church -- from without at the hands of the Emperor, Charles V, who was finally getting the political affairs of his realm in hand so that he could safely undertake the suppression of the Reformation by armed might. The advance of the Turks to the west had at last been halted and the king of France had been neutralized, so that Charles could now devote his full strength of arms against the German elements which supported and upheld the Reformation. As a result of all this, Luther expected war to break out in the near future, war in which a supreme effort would be made to wipe out the work of the Reformation in Germany. What filled him with even greater apprehension and mis-

givings, however, were the tendencies and attitudes which he saw developing in some of his co-workers in the Wittenburg faculty and elsewhere -- the tendencies toward rationalism and unionism. We recall that he once posted the sign above his study door: "Our professors are to be examined concerning the Lord's Supper," which was indicative of these misgivings of his.<sup>1</sup> His fervent and frequent prayer had been that he might be taken home by the Lord before the storm broke and these new tribulations overtook the Church. This prayer of his was granted.

Both these foreseen dangers became dread reality soon after Luther's death on February 18, 1546. Soon thereafter the Emperor made war on the Lutherans, who were banded together in the Smalcaldic League, in what is called the Smalcald War. Because the effectiveness of this league had been undermined by indifference and disunity, the Emperor won a smashing victory in the battle of Muehlberg on April 24, 1547, a little more than a year after Luther's death. As a result of this victory, Charles imposed on the Lutherans the so-called Augsburg Interim in 1548, the terms of which were to govern church affairs in his realm until they could be settled once and for all by the Council of Trent, which had been called by the Pope. This document, the Augsburg Interim, was drawn up by two papal bishops, on the one hand, and by John Agricola, a so-called Lutheran representative, on the other. John Agricola, however, was a man whom Luther had ceased to trust as early as 1540 because of his duplicity and insincerity. From that one may draw conclusions as to what might be expected of him in drawing up this Interim.

According to the Augsburg Interim, Lutheran pastors were to be allowed to perform marriages and to celebrate the Lord's Supper under both kinds; all the Romish customs and ceremonies were to be restored in the Lutheran churches; the supremacy of the Pope by divine right was to be acknowledged by the Lutherans, as well as the authority of the Catholic bishops; transubstantiation and the seven sacraments were reaffirmed; and articles were adopted "in which the doctrines were all explained in the sense of the Catholic dogmas, and in which truth and falsehood, in general, were badly mingled."<sup>2</sup> Especially the doctrine of justification by grace through faith was so presented that both parties could read their beliefs into it.

The Augsburg Interim proved completely unacceptable to those Lutherans who had Scripture-based convictions. Melanchthon, who was by many regarded as the leader after Luther's death, condemned it thoroughly in private discussions. He was, however, fearful of speaking out too loudly against it publicly, lest he antagonize the opposition and thereby bring even physical violence upon the Lutherans. He lacked the courage and convictions of a Luther, who would in a clear-cut manner uphold the truth and condemn error, leaving the consequences in the hands of the Savior, Whose cause was at stake. Melanchthon was a man of a compromising nature. So when the Elector Maurice saw that he could not enforce the Interim in his territories without bringing the wrath of his subjects down on himself, he so informed the Emperor and commissioned the theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig to draw up a substitute for the Augsburg Interim which would be more acceptable to the Lutherans. These theologians, among whom Melanchthon played the leading role, declared "their willingness to submit to the will of the Emperor with respect to the reintroduction of Romish ceremonies and to acknowledge the authority of the Pope and bishops if they would tolerate the true doctrine."<sup>3</sup> Melanchthon was for immovable steadfastness in doctrine, as he himself put it, but for submission in everything else for the sake of peace. It was his policy to yield and submit in all so-called external matters so long as the true doctrine might be proclaimed -- even if in a restricted form -- and the Church spared violence in the form of physical persecution. He rationalized that such persecution would do far more harm to weak souls than yielding in what he considered nonessential externals. The Leipzig Interim, as the new agreement was called, instead of promoting peace, produced nothing but dissension among Lutherans and brought forth a whole brood of errors seeking entrance into Lutheran theology.

The result was the formation of three parties among the Lutherans: 1) the Philippists, the followers of Melanchthon, found especially in the universities of Wittenberg and Leipzig, whose object it was to supplant the theology and authority of Luther with the unionistic, rationalistic, and liberal views of Melanchthon; 2) the Gnesio-Lutherans, represented chiefly by the theologians of Ducal Saxony -- men like Amsdorf, Flacius, etc. -- who were valiant champions of Luther and his theology and in-

tellecually superior to the Philippists; and 3) the Center-Party, composed of loyal Lutherans who took no conspicuous part in the controversies but were of special service in finally settling the controversies that arose from the Interim -- men like Brenz, Andreae, Chemnitz, Selnecker, and others. As a result of this Interim, the Lutheran Church for the next thirty years was wracked by controversies, which in the course of time were settled by the respective articles that make up the Formula of Concord, which then separated the true Lutherans from the false and was finally adopted generally in the year 1580 by all genuine Lutherans as their confession on the controverted points.

Each of these articles has a history of its own which might well be made the subject for special study and for the lessons to be learned from it for our own day. We shall, however, at this time confine ourselves to Melancthon's principles and mode of procedure in the Leipzig Interim and to the lessons from them which are applicable in our own time. It would seem that Melancthon had not gone through the intense, personal, spiritual struggles in arriving at his convictions in doctrinal matters through which Luther had passed. To him, with his intellectual bent of mind, the formulation of Scriptural doctrine had been more in the nature of a mental exercise. Therefore his convictions in matters pertaining to the Word of God were not nearly so deep as those of Luther, to whom one Word of God made the whole world too small. This tendency of Melancthon to give his human reason a place alongside the Word of God and to bend the Word to suit his own purposes had surfaced occasionally already during Luther's lifetime, for example, when he produced the altered Augsburg Confession; but the presence of Luther, whom he feared as being more than his equal, had always held him in check so that he kept these liberal, unionistic principles more or less under cover. With the death of Luther this restraint was gone, and we find his true theological nature manifesting itself more plainly.

Something similar, we have been told by those who are informed in these matters, occurred in the Missouri Synod. When the Brief Statement was adopted by that synod as its confession over against the contrary teachings found in the Lutheran synods outside the Synodical Conference, that was not so wholehearted as we might assume. At that time already there were certain liberals who were not at all

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in favor of its adoption, because it spoke out in too clear-cut a manner against errors held by other Lutheran bodies and because they feared it would hinder the cause of Lutheran union, which they at heart already espoused. Because of the presence of Dr. F. Pieper and other sturdy men of Scripture-based convictions, however, they did not dare to voice their dissent openly. With the death of Dr. Pieper in May of 1932 these men felt more free to express themselves openly and to make propaganda for their liberal views. From that time on they promoted discussions with the ALC, which brought forth the various documents which were supposed to settle the doctrinal issues between those two bodies and which finally resulted in a declaration of fellowship at the Denver convention of the LCMS. By this time liberalism had so taken over in Missouri that the majority no longer considered the differences in doctrine serious and divisive.

We ourselves observed something of a similar nature in the Wisconsin Synod. With the retirement of Pres. Brenner the liberal-minded began to work more openly for changing the course that had previously been followed by Wisconsin, which eventually led to the unscriptural thesis: "Termination of church fellowship is called for when you have gained the conviction that admonition is of no further avail." Had we all been better acquainted with the history and the controversies which eventually led up to the Formula of Concord, we would perhaps not have fallen into the confusion which followed. The lesson to be learned certainly is not to let such liberal theological views go unchallenged, when they manifest themselves, but to correct and excise them at once, instead of sweeping them under the rug, where they continue to grow and spread. That same lesson is certainly evident also from what came about as a result of Missouri's reluctance and refusal to deal firmly with the Statementarians of 1945. At that time Dr. Behnken played the role of a Melancthon in agreeing to have the Statement withdrawn but not retracted. This had the result that the evil seed continued to grow underground until it took over completely, as we see it today.

Another lesson is to be learned from Melancthon's fear of the consequences which led to his not speaking out openly and boldly against the Augsburg Interim, but to his substituting for it the Leipzig Interim with its compromises and weasel words and expressions. He argued

that it would be better for the welfare of souls to yield in external matters such as rites and ceremonies and in what he called minor matters of doctrine, in order to avoid outright persecution and total suppression of the truth. This sounds very plausible and good to our natural, human way of thinking. But it is in open contradiction of the Word of God and results, not in good, but only in harm for the Church of God, as the subsequent history of those days has borne out.

This calls to mind the argument so often advanced by many in Wisconsin that fellowship with Missouri must not be severed (though the divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine of Scripture were plainly apparent) for the sake of the souls that might still be rescued in that synod by continued admonition. This is another case of human reason considering its way better than that prescribed by God. The folly of that certainly has become apparent. This we need to remember also when we as a synod, or as congregations, or as pastors, are tempted to yield a bit of the truth for the sake of the advantages that would seem to accrue. Was it not that same fear of the consequences which influenced many during the controversy through which we recently passed, and kept them from taking their stand with the truth? How often was not the argument heard as to the number of congregations that would be lost to the synod, the number of members that would be lost to each congregation, the harm that would be done to such joint endeavors as Bethesda Home and the Negro Missions, if fellowship were terminated with the Missouri Synod? May we learn from what happened in consequence of the Leipzig Interim that following the dictates of human reason, instead of the Word of God, never does the Church of God any good but only harm. Our God does not place us on the horns of a dilemma. His instructions to us are simply to confess His Truth and to be obedient to the same and to leave the outcome to Him, to set our human reason aside and to follow His instructions implicitly. What God told disobedient Saul through Samuel remains forever true: "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams."

In closing, we should like to call attention to a final lesson that may well be learned from the very way in which the articles of the Formula of Concord are set up. In each of them the point of controversy is clearly de-

fined and set down; then the correct teaching of Scripture is clearly spelled out; and thereupon the errors which have arisen are plainly identified and repudiated and condemned in antitheses, so that there is no misunderstanding as to what is confessed. In our day and age this method of confessing the truth has become unpopular. Antitheses are no longer desired or used by most Lutherans in their statements of what they believe and confess; especially are they not used in what are supposed to be doctrinal agreements. This enables errorists to read their contrary opinions and beliefs into them. That was one of the outstanding weaknesses of the Doctrinal Affirmation of the 1940's and the Common Confession of 1950. This departure from the good old, tried and true Lutheran method no doubt helped to make it much easier to finally declare fellowship between Missouri and the ALC. Let us learn from the example of the framers of the Formula of Concord what truly serves the best interests of the Church and the truth.

H. C. Duehlmeier

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. "Gospel Reductionism," *Journal of Theology*, June, 1974, p. 8.
2. F. Bente, "Historical Introduction to the Symbolical Books," *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 95.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

## ==== PANORAMA =====

### SOME REFLECTIONS ON OUR AGE

To the careful and perceptive observer of this age in which we live it should be apparent that we are confronted with a wide-spread rebellion against what is popularly called "the establishment." There is a massive wave of opposition rolling and tossing, which is threatening to inundate the *terra firma* of institutions which God in His goodness and mercy has established for the benefit of mankind and especially for the welfare of His Church. If it were only a matter of outward form that is at stake, the situation would not be so serious and one could concede the value of change and development. Indeed, the Lord has freed us from outward ceremonial rites

and has left us free to move through varied forms in the liberty of the Gospel. But the rebellion against institutions and the establishment is directed not so much against outward established forms, but rather it tears at the very vitals of the Gospel ministry of reconciliation and seeks finally to replace the Jesus of divine prophecy and fulfillment with a savior constructed out of man's imagination and philosophical thought. This may be the farthest from the thoughts of those who become involved, but in the final analysis this is the aim and goal of the old evil foe who lies at the root of all open or veiled resistance to divinely established institutions.

Rebellion is not restricted to the young and immature, as is mistakenly thought to be the case, but it embraces and includes all, both young and old, who claim to have reached a deeper understanding of the spiritual values and proceed to set themselves up as patterns for, and as leaders of, those who have become disenchanted with their former confessions and commitments. Self-appointed reformers mushroom wherever the storms of discontent sweep over the land and provide open ground for cult and sect to flourish and to grow. Accusations of deadness, of inactivity, of hypocrisy, of dishonesty, of formalism, are made against the institutions, and as replacements such things are offered as transcendental meditation, bestowal of charismatic gifts of the Holy Ghost, superstitious and occult arts obtained even from Satan, Marxist philosophy, hedonism, and the new morality with its pandering to the flesh. These are some of the reactions discernible to those who will open their eyes to see what is taking place.

In times such as these it becomes more and more apparent how important it is to stand up and bear witness to the eternal truth and send forth the clarion call which sounds out loud and clear: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. It is clear that there is a great need to freshen our memories of such important summaries as the one given by John through inspiration: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 2:31. It was Jesus Who said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

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I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." John 10:10-15. In His sermon on the Bread of Life the Savior warned: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." John 6:27.

Let us make no mistake about it; at the bottom of every false doctrine and heresy lies hidden the ultimate goal of our adversary to provide a substitute for the one and only Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus warned of this when He said: "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before." Matthew 24:23-25. It should be more and more evident how important it is to keep the testimony pure and to purge out the leaven of false doctrine which threatens to permeate and corrupt whatever it touches and, moreover, to separate from those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. He who calls such an offender a brother in the faith is giving comfort to the enemy and is misleading not only the one who needs correction but also is giving false direction to those who are looking for guidance and true leadership in the truth. And there is more than a little truth to the saying, "Your actions speak so loudly I can't hear a thing that you say!" It is time to give close attention not only to the confession of the lips but also to the confession we give by our life and by our practice. In the face of the holocaust which threatens, it saddens the heart and weighs down the spirit to see how many are functioning in a way that provides grist for the mill of those who would discredit the Church and all her works and ways.

Much as we rejoice wherever and whenever God's Gospel truth is being proclaimed, sadness descends upon the spirit when one sees how church politics on the pro and con side of a question at times arise to cast a shadow upon good confessions and statements that have otherwise been made. One sees some people backing off when they should stand fast, and others refusing to back down when they should be ready to yield -- all for the fear of rocking the boat or spoiling one's chances with the majority which holds the purse and wields the influence. Taking the over-all view, one has to say that churches in general are in bad shape, and protestations to the effect that all things are, in the final analysis, the same as they have been for a hundred years or more render poor service by way of making things better. Claims of loyalty to the Gospel are heard on every hand by conservatives, moderates, and liberals, but these do not sound forth with any ring of convincing commitment when, on the one hand, the Gospel is left indistinct and uncertain, woven into a book which they say cannot quite be trusted in all its parts for facticity; and, on the other hand, when ploys are used to save the pieces which do not fit and have no place in any church committed to an unconditioned Gospel proclaimed by a Word infallible and inerrant in all its words and parts. Ears are not going to be opened to a proper hearing of the glories of the Kingdom of Christ and the Church Universal so long as outward establishment wavers and totters on the brink of disaster because of its foolish establishmentarianism.

On the other hand, we can hope for a hearing by the disenchanted when it become clear that there is a sincere, personal, individual commitment to eternal truths which will not be evaded or refashioned or watered down to suit any establishment, large or small, and when it is evident that individuals do not wait for mass action or majority vote before doing what the Word of God calls for. When the Church, without fan-fare or glamorous display, quietly and appropriately presents the Gospel of pardon and forgiveness to sinners ruined by the fall, then we need not be concerned about statistics or the impact or the growth. The Lord takes care of that, for the power is in the Word and does not depend upon the wisdom of man.

*C. M. Gullerud*

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT  
LEADERSHIP AND LOYALTY

*Christianity Today*, in its  
issue of October 25, 1974,  
featured an interview with Dr.

J. A. O. Preus, President of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Among other questions asked, the interviewer queried: "If the liberals come to power, would you be part of a conservative walk-out?" Dr. Preus answered: "If the liberals win, which they are seeking to do, I think there could be a major split the other way, much larger than we have ever had. Four hundred delegates at the Denver convention in 1969 were ready to walk out because we went into fellowship with the ALC. I calmed them down. This could happen again. As far as I'm concerned, I do not want to take part in any effort to split the church. I would not be party to any effort to split the Missouri Synod or lead any dissident group." (p. 17)

In 1954 Dr. Preus (then a member of the ELS) memorialized the ELS to suspend relations with the Missouri Synod because of unionistic activities and documents which surfaced as an outgrowth of its negotiations with the ALC. At the 1955 convention of the ELS he joined in sponsoring and in adopting the following resolution: "We hereby declare with deepest regret that fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod are suspended on the basis of Rom. 16:17, and that the exercise of such relations cannot be resumed until the offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned have been removed by them in a proper manner." (ELS Proceedings, 1955, p. 46.) It would not be difficult to prove that the Missouri Synod, far from having removed the offenses cited in 1955, has rather deteriorated and become more and more entrenched in those offenses. It would not be difficult to prove that the ALC, far from having purged itself of its doctrinal aberrations and false, unscriptural practises, has rather become more liberal and more firmly fastened into its unionistic and syncretistic course. Frankly, one would have to say that President Preus would have shown real leadership if he had told the 400 delegates not only that they had scriptural reasons for walking out but that he would, furthermore, walk out with them. This would have had to be his answer if he believed in 1969 as he did in 1954 and 1955. It is evident that a change has taken place, not in the Missouri Synod, but in its President. And it saddens us.

It seems to us that such a great and consuming desire to hold the synod together has so blinded the president of the Missouri Synod that he does not see clearly as he once did. His playing down of the schisms which have occurred in the last generation because of Missouri's liberalism indicates this, as did also his answer to the previous question cited. The *Christianity Today* interviewers posed this question: "If schism occurred, what portion of the local congregations do you think would remain within the denomination?" Dr. Preus's answer: "We have had three schisms in the last generation and no more than thirty congregations left each time. I would be very surprised if more than twenty-five congregations would leave because of the present struggle. The synodical structure makes it very difficult for congregations to leave, and the people are loyal to the Missouri Synod because of its doctrinal commitment and its educational program. Our thorough confirmation instruction gives the average layman a strong foundation in Christian doctrine. Most -- say 95 per cent -- of the laity are satisfied." (p. 11) The statement which declares that the synodical structure makes it very difficult for congregations to leave is certainly not to the credit of Missouri. Our question is: "What is gained when congregations are retained and held in a synodical fellowship against their will and consent?" Once more we are reminded of the wisdom of Missouri's own *Brief Statement* of 1932: "All Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17."

C. M. Gullerud



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