

A Comparative Study of 2 Thessalonians 3.14-15 and Titus 3.10 with Practical Emphasis of the implication upon present intersynodical controversy.

I. A comparative study of 2 Thessalonians 3.14-15 and Titus 3.10.

A. A Study of 2 Thessalonians 3.14-15.

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Let us begin our discussion of this topic by studying each of these passages separately. The translation of 2 Thess. 3.14-15 is as follows: "But if any does not obey our word by the epistle, Note that one for yourselves, not to be associated with him, in order that he might be put to shame. And do not consider as an enemy, but admonish as a brother." Luther has a translation with a different meaning, which is universally rejected by all other translations. Luther writes "So aber Jemand nicht gehorsam ist unserm Wort, denn zeichnet an durch einen Brief, und baht nichts mit ihm zu schaffen, auf dass er schamroth werde. Doch haltet ihn nicht als einen Feind, sondern vermahnet ihn als einen Bruder.

Why did Paul write these words to the Thessalonians. He had praised them for their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations. They were troubled, however, by the fact that the teaching that the last day was at hand had gained strong support with disastrous results. Some of them walked disorderly. Others refused to work begging from those who did. The congregation did not regard this too seriously, but rather by their action of not taking any action, condoned it. We are not told that the people involved in this disorderly and lazy way of life advocated it by public preaching, but by their actions they certainly preached a powerful sermon in favor of it.

In his first epistle Paul had warned against such activity on their part, but apparently with no results. He had said, 1 Thess. 4.11-12 - "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing". Since he had had no results, Paul again warns them against a disorderly way of life and laziness. He issues a directive against those who have in this way departed from the truth and refused to repent. He said, Note that man; Mark him; point him out. This was to be done by the congregation as a unit and not merely by individual members. All are to do the disciplining for only in this way will it have its desired effect. They were to have nothing to do with that sinful way of life. For as true christians the Thessalonians were not to walk in the way of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners. Certainly they were not to contribute to the support of these disorderly and lazy, nor in any way support the way they had chosen. The questions may be asked whether or not they were to break off all association with the ones going astray, or does this noting and having no company with, simply refer to congregational life, seriously questioning whether he is still a brother. From the fact that they were still to admonish them, it would appear that this noting and avoiding referred only to those things of a religious nature.

What is the purpose for this marking, noting, and avoiding association with them? The refusal by the Thessalonians of the hand of fellowship to them, should have its mark upon those desiring to remain in the christian fellowship, in this that they see their sin and repent. They had refused all previous admonition, so now more drastic steps had to be instituted. They also such disorderly persons, walking contrary to the Word of God certainly worked harm on the christian congregation, by their example affecting the other members. Even in the eyes of the world, the christian church is discredited for tolerating such activity on the part of its membership.

Even though the Thessalonians should withdraw the hand of fellowship from those refusing to repent, as an extreme admonition to lead them to repentance, they were to continue to try to win them with admonition. All personal feelings of hostility should be left out of such admonition. Perhaps members of the congregation had very evil thoughts concerning these individuals because of the trouble they were causing in the congregation and also the impression they were giving to the unbelieving world. Paul says that such thoughts of hostility have no place in the admonishment of an individual to bring them to repentance. They should continue to admonish these persons as they would a brother. They are not to turn their backs upon them and at once regard them as hopeless. (the word in our verse for admonish, *noutheteite*, is translated "warn" in 1 Thess. 5.14). As long as there was still hope that the repentance of the sinner could be brought about, the door to return is to be left open. Yet we note that even though there is hope that the sinner may return and repent, their love would prompt them to take note of him and withdraw from him, not being associated with him. Even when it becomes evident that the sinner would not repent, all personal enmity must still be avoided and he must be excommunicated in all love, so that he might be conscious of his great sin and repent. It is self-evident that if the sinner does not repent, he is excommunicated from the christian congregation.

2 Thessalonians 3.14-15 is dealing with christians who have departed from the truth and are living in a sinful, disorderly way. They are to be admonished. When they will not hear, finally a part of this admonition is to withdraw from them, even though all hope for them is not given up, so that they will realize their sin and repent.

Let us now turn to Titus 3.10 - "A heretical man after the first and second admonition avoid or reject." The verb *paratecma* has the meanings to avoid, reject with scorn, avoid through request, or turn away from. Luther translated it, "Einen ketzerischen Menschen meiden, wenn er einmal und abermal ermahnet ist". What is a heretic? In classical Greek *Hairetikos* has the meaning of intelligent, able to choose. *Haeresis* is used for a sect, or the teachings of a sect. A heretic was therefore one who followed the teachings of his own devising. His teachings are a chosen view, or chosen views of his own which are not in agreement with the Holy Scriptures. Any teaching that forsakes the holy scriptures and certainly those that contradict the scriptures would certainly stamp a man as a heretic. Paul used the very argument that he believed all things written in the law and the prophets to prove that he was not a heretic. He said, Acts 24.14 - "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets". (Paul's words to Felix after he had been accused by Tertullus).

Not only does the heretic hold these teachings contrary to the scriptures, but he seeks to spread them.

The heretic causes divisions and offenses contrary to the true doctrine which we have learned, (Romans 16.17). By his teaching of these false doctrines he gives many simple christians many occasions of stumbling. He also refuses to hear the church. He will evade discussing matters of doctrine on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and will place all importance upon things mentioned in 1 Tim.1.4 - as fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith".

What are we to do in regard to the false teachings of the heretic and the heretic himself? Paul tells us in v.9 - But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain". So we see that we are to avoid all false doctrine and things which do not contribute to our salvation. But what about the Heretic? Paul says, paraitou, which, as we have mentioned, means reject with scorn; avoid through request, or turn away from. This word is also translated as refuse in 1 Tim.4.7 - But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness". Also translated as avoid in 2 Tim.2.23 - But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife".

This is the course that should be followed by the church, namely to reject the heretic. The sad fact is that too often men who turn away from the truth are highly honored, and praised as men with more enlightenment and more love.

The question may arise whether paraitou implies formal excommunication. This is not necessary, for the heretics have separated themselves and are condemned by their formally enlightened selves. Paul says in v.11, Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself". The very fact of avoiding the heretic may, however, cause the man's enlightened self to re-evaluate his position and bring him to repentance. So even the avoiding of this heretic would be done in all love to try to bring him to repentance. This avoiding should also be done in obedience to the Word of God to beware of false prophets, and to confess the truth at all times.

Titus 3.10 deals with those who had been christians, departed from the truth and taught these false teachings. They too are to be spoken to, but then the break must take place. They must be rejected. If there is a degree of patience in the actions outlined in Thessalonians 3.14-15 and Titus 3.10, it is this that more patience must be shown the christian led away into sin, than to the heretic, the false prophet.

In the second portion of this paper let us consider the implication upon present intersynodical controversy.

There is a definite implication here, namely that our Synod has sinned by procrastination, in not taking the proper action in regard to the Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod has departed from the clear teaching of God's Word in, just to name a few, its stand on Scouting, the Chaplaincy, and its adoption of the Common Confession

as a settlement of differences, which in fact were not settled at all. Our Synod admonished the Missouri Synod for many years through intersynodical relation meetings, and by addressing their Synod conventions by letter and through our representatives. Missouri refused to heed. Then our Wisconsin Synod declared itself in a state of confession, although this should have been done years before, it was not done until 1953. Our love for the Missouri Synod should have prompted this move before. This state of confession has rightly been called the state of confusion simply because we do not have the courage to face the fact that the Missouri Synod and our Synod, as a whole I hope, are not breathing the same spirit. In a state of confession all prayer, pulpit and church fellowship with the Missouri Synod should have come to an end. Members and pastors should not have been released to the Missouri Synod. No more should joint prayer have been used at the intersynodical meetings, for we were no longer one in spirit. Our Synod was in the role of the one admonishing and Missouri was in the role of presenting arguments for her defense. The words of Paul to the Thessalonians should have guided our actions at this stage of the controversy, And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed".

The argument is often advanced that we had to treat the Missouri Synod as brothers as we formerly had done, else all will have been lost. That argument is without foundation. God's Word must be obeyed, and Missouri could have changed that sad condition at any time, by acknowledging that she had erred and returning to her old confession of faith and practise with which we, as a Synod, had agreed for so many years. (I am not going to get involved in doubtful disputations about the many exceptional cases which might arise with the members of the Missouri Synod, and even some pastors). In our state of confession our obligation to God and the Missouri Synod should have moved us to have no company with them in matters of religion, so that they might have been ashamed. Without personal enmity that admonishing could have continued, just as we would show love to those whom we still regard as brothers, and who have been led into a sinful disorderly way of life. We should have noted them and had no company with them.

Our guilt becomes greater when we see from the history of the past years that not only has the Missouri Synod become guilty of being led into error as a church body, but by making propaganda for the stand she has taken of the scout and chaplaincy questions and the cause of the Common Confession, I believe that we can say that Missouri has become guilty of heresy, accepting teachings contrary to the Word of God and teaching them to her people. The Missouri Synod has become definitely unionistic as is shown by their determined attitude to draw up some sort of doctrinal agreement with church bodies from whom they have been separated for many years because of doctrine, even when they are not agreed on the very fundamental doctrine that each and every Word of the Holy Scriptures is the inspired Word of God.

In spite of all the admonition given to the Missouri Synod by our Wisconsin Synod; in spite of the happily stated opinion of the leaders of liberal church bodies that Missouri has changed her position, Missouri has not made a single move to acknowledge that she has erred in any of the things wherein we have charged them with error. Rather they have leaped to the defense of their actions with the well known cliches of "You Wisconsin Synod people don't

understand" or "We, as the Missouri Synod do not know enough about this or that activity to pass judgment on it. (Cf. Lutheran Men of America in Milwaukee).

We have our duty to obey the Word of God to reject heretics. Let us be honest with Missouri and ourselves and recognize that Missouri by her continued defense and propaganda for the false unionistic stand she has taken and by her continual refusal to repent and to return to the truth, has become a heretical church body. Arguments are always advanced that they have many members and pastors who are not aware of that fact and do not know what's going on. Then it's our duty to draw it to their attention by a very definite move on our part to sever our relationship with Missouri. It is our duty to the Word of God in the verse before us to do so.

We always are encouraged to have patience. When does patience involve us in becoming guilty of other mens' wicked deeds? I believe that that time has already passed. We should obey the Word of God and be very definite in our action against the Missouri Synod and pass resolutions as a Synod, which are clearly stated, in language which will call false doctrine, false doctrine, and a heretic, a heretic, so that the resolutions cannot be understood in the way that anyone pleases to understand them. Any more procrastination in our dealings with Missouri and seeing hope for reunion where there is no return to the truth makes us every more guilty of the wicked course which Missouri chooses to follow. Paul says, reject. Dare we say otherwise? The answer is self evident. We cannot.