

*Timely Topics*

RELATING TO THE TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP  
WITH THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

*by*

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The Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod

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### PREFACE

In this series of five articles Professor Armin Schuetze answers five questions which arose in connection with the action by which the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod terminated fellowship relations with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. These questions were sent in by readers of *The Northwestern Lutheran*. Professor Schuetze then gave the answers in his column "A Lantern to Our Footsteps."

Anticipating a continuing need for material such as that presented in these articles, the Commission on Doctrinal Matters arranged for their publication in the present form.

### THE TOPICS TREATED:

- I. May We Pray at Table With People Not of the Wisconsin Synod?
- II. What Is Meant by "Serve Their Own Belly" in Romans 16:18?
- III. Is the Synod Resolution Binding on All Congregations?
- IV. Is the "Avoid Them" of Romans 16:17 the Same as Excommunication?
- V. Does Matthew 7:1 Prohibit All Judging?

## **May We Pray At Table With People Not of the Wisconsin Synod?**

This question has at times been asked in connection with the presentation on the doctrine of church or religious fellowship that our Commission on Doctrinal Matters used in their discussions in the Joint Union Committees of the Synodical Conference. And no doubt it is a question that is being asked even more often now that our Synod felt compelled to suspend its fellowship relations with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. What answer does Scripture give to the above question?

### **Preliminary Considerations**

There is no reason for a Christian to abandon prayer and family devotion when others of another faith are present with him at his table. It is his home, and he will proceed with prayer and devotion as he does when no guests are present. Nor is the Christian called upon first to make an announcement to those of another faith that they, of course, are excluded from his fellowship at that time. When St. Paul was on board ship on his journey to Rome, and a severe storm threatened shipwreck, he encouraged the others on board ship to eat, and we read of him: "And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat" (Acts 27:35). Paul did not hesitate to pray in the presence of the heathen on board ship. It was a good testimony, and so will our prayer and devotion be.

Circumstances may bring you to the table of those not of your faith. When you are a guest at another person's table, and he speaks his table prayer in your presence, you surely will permit him to do so without disturbing him, even though it may be that you are not joining him in his prayer.

There may also be instances when you attend a dinner, a banquet at which people of many faiths are present. Sometimes committees that arrange such gatherings, through misguided piety, will invite the Roman Catholic priest or some Protestant pastor to speak a table prayer. Scripture does not absolutely forbid your presence at worship in which you yourself cannot join. Elisha did not tell Naaman that he was sinning by being present at his king's side in the temple of the idol of Syria, Rimmon (cf. II Kings 5:18, 19). However, you will have no part in setting up such worship; if you serve on a committee to make the arrangements, you will use your influence to prevent such prayers that are intended to unite people of various faiths in worship.

## Getting at the Real Question

What has been said up to now doesn't, however, really answer our question. We are not asking what we may do *in the presence* of someone else or what he may do in our presence. We are asking whether we may *jointly* pray at table with anyone who belongs to a church body not in confessional fellowship with us. May we actually *jointly* appear with our prayers before the throne of God?

## Avoid Persistent Errorists

God does want us to join with fellow Christians in worshipping Him, in prayer. But He forbids us to do that with those who persistently hold to false doctrine. About them His command is: "avoid them" (Rom. 16:17), and that will include avoiding joint prayer with them.

## How to Recognize Persistent Errorists

If you are to avoid persistent errorists, you must in some way recognize them. You cannot, of course, look into their hearts. Only God can do that. You are to judge them by their fruits, by what they produce. Jesus said: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). In this case that is their confession. St. John warns his readers not to believe every spirit, but to try (test) the spirits whether they are of God. How will they be able to do this? He continues: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (I John 4:2, 3). This gives expression to the principle: we must judge on the basis of the confession that is made.

## In Regard to Joint Public Expressions of Faith

Membership in a church body is an act of confession. Through his membership a person confesses himself to the teachings of that church. In joint expressions of faith that are public, such as, for example, public worship, prayer together in public, going to the Lord's Supper together, you would have to judge the other person on the basis of this confession of church membership, which is a public confession. To disregard this public confession would only create offense and confusion. Whoever is a member of a persistently erring church body needs to be avoided in all joint public expressions of faith.

## What About Private Personal Relationships to Others?

But now such a person from an erring church body is with you in your home, or you are in his home. From your private contact with him you know that he confesses trust in Christ as his Savior from sin, that he confesses himself to the Scriptures. It is apparent that his membership in the false church body is the result of a still weak faith which does not fully understand the seriousness of the errors, or it is clear that he actually does not share the errors at all. In this case you have more to go by than the confession of his church membership; there is also his own personal confession before you.

And since now in your private personal relationship to him public offense and confusion is not involved, you may well ask yourself: Is this perhaps one of those of whom the Word of God tells you: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. 14:1)? Is this a smoking flax that you are not to quench? Thus, in your private relations where public offense is not involved, you may on the basis of a man's confession recognize him as a brother in Christ with whom you may then also join in prayer, and that includes table prayer.

### **Not a Set of Rules, but Guiding Principles**

We see then that Scripture does not give an absolute *yes* or an absolute *no* as the answer to our question. And it does not set up a detailed set of rules that tells you exactly what you must do under every circumstance. But it does give the principles that are to guide you; it does say that you are to take note of the confession of those who come to you and want to be acknowledged as fellow Christians. If that confession shows them to be persistent errorists, you are to avoid joint expressions of faith with them. If that confession shows them to be brethren, in some cases still weak brethren (and in private relations a personal confession may reveal him to be that in spite of doubtful church connections), you may engage in joint expressions of faith for your mutual encouragement.

## **II**

### **What Is Meant by "Serve Their Own Belly" in Romans 16:18?**

Romans 16:18 reads: "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The question may be asked: By referring also to verse 18 in our resolution breaking off fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod, are we calling all the Missouri Synod people, or at least all their pastors and leaders "belly-servers"? Another may say: Their pastors preach the Gospel, how can you call them "belly-servers"? Unfortunately an editorial that appeared on page 3 of *The Lutheran Witness* of September 19, 1961, sheds no light on the true meaning of this passage but can only serve to confuse its readers.

#### **The Meaning of "Belly" Here**

"Belly-server" is one of those words that so easily gives rise to false conceptions. Here we shall have to take a careful look at what the word used for "belly" in the original Greek means in this connection. The word used in verse 18 appears also in John 7:38, where we read: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In this verse some translators have recognized what the Greek really had in mind when he said "belly" in passages such as this. It has been translated as "heart," "inmost heart," and simply "from within him." Also in Romans 16:18 the word has been translated in various ways, as for instance by "appetites," or by saying that such people are "utterly self-centered." The

“belly” was thought of very much as we think of the heart, man’s inmost being, the seat of thought and desire. While the passage in John 7 has the Christian heart in mind, Romans 16:18 refers to man’s sinful heart. Therefore the part of verse 18 that we are considering expresses this thought: They that are such, namely, division-makers, are not serving, that is, are not taking their orders from the Lord Jesus Christ but from their own natural sinful heart, which even a Christian still has.

### **“They that are such”**

To understand this verse properly we must also take note of the words: “they that are such.” These words tell us of whom it is said that they serve not the Lord Jesus but their own heart. Who are “they that are such”? This expression points back to verse 17. This refers to such who “cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.” This applies to whoever teaches and practices and defends what is not according to the truth of Scripture, even though he has not fallen from faith and still serves the Lord in many other respects. Naturally this does not apply to him in so far as he is proclaiming the Gospel or comforting a sinner with the assurance of forgiveness from the Scriptures. But in so far as he teaches and defends error, he is not taking orders from the Lord Jesus but, as verse 18 says, from his own mind and heart.

### **Conscious Errorists?**

Another thought in connection with verse 18. Nothing here is said to the effect that those who serve not the Lord Jesus but their own heart are doing that consciously. In fact, the contrary may well be the case. When the Apostle Paul in his earlier life persecuted the Christians, he was not consciously doing something that displeased God. He really thought that he was doing God a service by rooting out what he considered heresy. He did not realize that he was actually serving his sinful mind and heart instead of God. The errorist may not consciously make up his mind to follow, not Christ, but his own flesh. Yet that he is doing so is true nevertheless.

### **God’s Judgment**

Finally we need to realize who it is that is making the judgment in verse 18. Who says of such who persist in error that they serve their own heart? This is not the word and judgment of man. It is not the basis upon which *we* are to determine to whom Romans 16:17, 18 applies. It is the pronouncement of *God*. In verse 18 it is the Lord who tells us that when we see those who are persistent errorists, whom He wants us to avoid, we are to bear in mind as an earnest warning that they by their errors are not serving Christ but their sinful heart.

What, then, are we saying whenever we need to apply Romans 16:17, 18 to an individual or a church body? We are saying this: By your continued teaching and defense of error, by your continued practice contrary to Scripture, you have shown yourselves such who are causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned from the Scriptures; in verse 17 the Lord tells us to avoid you, that is, to avoid religious fellowship with you.

By adding verse 18 the further thought is expressed: The Lord also has this to say to you: as such who teach and defend error, you are not serving the Lord Jesus; whether you realize it or not, whether you intend it that way or not, you are actually taking orders from your own mind and heart, in so far as you uphold your error.

“Belly-servers”? This is a loaded word, one that arouses emotions, one easily misunderstood. It were better not used. But that is not to minimize the seriousness of what is said in verse 18. It is a serious matter to take orders from our sinful mind and heart in place of the Lord Jesus and His Word. It is God’s pronouncement upon the errorist. Let him who departs from the truth hear and be warned!

### III

## Is the Synod Resolution Binding On All Congregations?

This is a question that has been asked in a number of letters that have been received. The question has reference to the resolutions passed at the convention last August (1961) suspending fellowship relations with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Is every congregation of our Synod bound by this resolution?

### Our Relationship to One Another in Our Synod

In considering this question it will be well for us to keep in mind what our relationship in the Synod is toward one another.

The Lord leads us as Christians together into a fellowship. He wants us to be joined with those with whom we are united in faith and confession. We are to join in worshiping Him; we are to unite hands in doing His work, in proclaiming His Gospel. He brings us together into congregations. Similarly, He brings us together into larger bodies to carry on work that we cannot do adequately as separate congregations. He brings congregations together for joint work into a synod.

### The Tie That Binds Together In a Congregation and a Synod

What is it that unites us as individual Christians within a congregation or as congregations within a synod? It is not simply some kind of legal bond established through the signing of a constitution. We may do that as an orderly procedure. But what actually unites us is our common faith in the Savior and His Word, a common love for Him, and flowing out of that, also a deep love for one another. We are drawn toward those who profess the same faith in Christ that we profess. We recognize them as such with whom we can worship God and join in doing the Lord’s work. Thus there are very close ties that unite us within a congregation and within a synod.

## **The Place of a Constitution in Our Synodical Life**

Since the Lord wants us to work together in His kingdom in an orderly way, we set up constitutions by which we agree on the way we intend to do things. A congregation's constitution will state when meetings are to be held, who may be a voting member, etc. Similarly, when congregations join together in a synod, they agree upon certain orderly procedures they intend to follow in doing their joint work. This is the way the Lord wants it. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

### **What We Have Agreed on Regarding Relations With Other Churches**

As a group of congregations gathered together into a synod, we have agreed that our relations toward other church bodies will be our joint undertaking. It would be impossible for each individual congregation directly to carry on discussions with other church bodies to determine their relations. So we have appointed a Commission on Doctrinal Matters to represent the Synod in doctrinal discussions before other church bodies.

### **What We Have Agreed on Regarding the Making of Decisions**

We have also agreed on how decisions on the work we do jointly are to be made. This is done through a representative group made up of delegates from our congregations, our pastors and our male teachers. That is our Synod convention. Before such a convention meets, reports are prepared by all committees. These are published and then discussed at delegate conferences. Also our synod publications present convention previews. In this way the business that will come before the convention may be known by all. Any individual or group may also submit a memorial to the Synod in which he may express himself as to the decision he desires the Synod to make or not to make. However, we have agreed that the voters at the convention are to make the final decisions. Whatever resolutions they in convention pass we recognize as being passed for all of us.

### **Carrying Out Decisions of the Synod**

When resolutions are passed in a congregation, the bond of faith that unites the entire congregation should move them to unite in carrying out the resolutions passed in an orderly manner. Also those who may not have had a vote will help to carry them out. Thus also in the Synod, the common faith we have, the love we have for one another as brethren in Christ, will move us to join in carrying out the resolutions that have been passed in a convention in the orderly manner that we have agreed upon.

### **More Involved in This Case**

However, in the resolution suspending fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod more is involved than this that it was passed by our representatives in a convention in an orderly manner. When this resolution was passed, the considerable majority of delegates that voted in favor of it (124-49) did

this, not simply because they felt that that was the wise course to follow, the most expedient thing to do, but they said that they were convinced that they were doing something God asked them to do according to Romans 16:17, 18. A large majority of those who heard the discussion at the convention both pro and con, who heard the reports of committees, who had all the information that could be received, felt bound in their consciences to say: This is a situation where the Word of God spoken in Romans 16:17, 18 applies.

### **What If Some Disagree With the Decision?**

But let us say there is an individual or congregation that says: We are in full agreement with you that we must avoid persistent errorists; not to do so is sinful unionism; but we do not see that the Missouri Synod is a body to whom this applies. What are they to do?

If I am in disagreement with a brother, I need to discuss that disagreement with him. If a congregation is in disagreement with any action the Synod takes, and that is all the more true of an action which the Synod says it must take in applying the Word of God, then they shall need to discuss this with their brethren. They should ask themselves: Did my brethren who acted at the convention have information that I have not received, that I perhaps did not take note of, which led them to the decision they made? Our Synod has recognized that there may be those who seek such added information. For that reason several years ago it established a Study Committee, which is willing to discuss these matters with any individual or congregation. Arrangements to meet with this committee may be made through the District president. Only if a congregation, after having received full information, is convinced that the action of the Synod is sinful, may it declare its refusal to follow the resolution.

### **Summing Up**

Is the Synod resolution binding upon all? We sum up as follows: On the one hand we shall recognize that the delegates who vote at a synod meeting are making decisions for all of us. If, however, my conscience is troubled by a resolution that is passed, I will consult with my brethren. Before condemning the action or even deciding to disregard it, I will want to hear from them the reasons that led them to their action. I will seek that information with an open mind, recognizing that they may have gained insights both at the convention and in their various contacts that I may not as yet have. But particularly when a resolution intends to be an application of a word of Scripture, care must be taken not to reject it without careful study and investigation. Only when I am convinced that it is sinful, may it be rejected by me.

## **IV**

### **Is the "Avoid Them" of Romans 16:17 the Same As Excommunication?**

The question is sometimes asked: How are we to look upon Lutherans who are not members of a synod with which we are in fellowship? This is

really not a new question. It is one we have had to answer for years. But there is renewed interest in it because we no longer are in fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a body with whom we had close fraternal ties for over 90 years. Do we look upon all of them as unbelievers? Do we claim that they are no longer Christians? When someone is excommunicated from a Christian congregation, that is what is meant. Is the “avoid them” of Romans 16:17 the same as excommunicated?

### **With Whom Does Matthew 18:15-17 Concern Itself?**

Let us compare Romans 16:17 with Matthew 18:15-17, the important reference that speaks of excommunication. We ask first: To whom is each of them applicable, the avoiding of Romans 16 and the excommunication of Matthew 18? Our Savior says in Matthew 18: “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” Then He shows the lengths to which a Christian will go in his efforts to bring his sinning brother to repentance. He will speak to him alone. If he fails, he will enlist the help of one or two other Christian brethren, and if that still results in failure, the congregation is to be called upon to help. When all of these earnest, consecrated efforts result in failure, it has become apparent that the man is an impenitent sinner. He has shown himself to be one who has hardened his heart against the Christian admonition that has been spoken to him. He will not repent. Here then we are concerned with an impenitent sinner, one whose impenitence in the face of earnest Christian admonition shows him to have lost his faith in Christ.

### **Who Is Spoken of in Romans 16:17?**

Now let us look at Romans 16:17. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” Who is spoken of here? Those who are guilty of departing from the Scriptures in doctrine and practice. This, however, does not have reference to such who in weakness fall into an error which they readily give up again when they are corrected by the Word of God. The form of the Greek word that is translated “cause” really means “are causing or making,” or we may say, “are continuing to make or cause.” They are such who continue in their error, uphold it, defend it. For that reason, we usually refer to them as “persistent errorists.” Whether this error has resulted in a complete loss of faith or not is not the consideration here. It may have, and again it may not have, resulted in that. Although error is harmful to faith, not every error will make the presence of faith impossible. The point here is that they have shown themselves to persist in their errors.

So the one is applicable to an impenitent sinner, who has lost his faith; the other, to all persistent errorists.

### **The Action Called For in Matthew 18**

Let us next compare our two references as to the action that each calls for. In Matthew 18 our Savior says: “Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” After his impenitence has shown him to be a sinner who has lost his faith, he is no longer to be considered a fellow Christian. He is to

be looked upon as an unbeliever. He is excluded from the Christian congregation as one who by his impenitence has shown himself to be on the way to eternal damnation. This exclusion we commonly call excommunication.

### **The Action That Romans 16 Calls For**

What is called for in Romans 16? "Avoid them," we read. This would be excommunication only if the persistent errorist has shown himself to be impenitent, to be an unbeliever. Yet that does not lie in the term itself, and in most cases it would not mean excommunication. But there is to be an avoiding. Does this mean that I cannot carry on business with them? Does it mean that I may no longer buy insurance from an A.A.L. salesman who belongs to the Missouri Synod? (This question was asked in a letter.) Does this mean that I may not visit with them on a social level? Surely not. But it does mean that we cannot treat them as Christian brethren, for error has come between us, divides them from us, even though it may not have completely destroyed their faith. We usually put it this way: We cannot have religious fellowship with them.

### **Matthew 18 Deals With Individuals**

Let us compare the two references in one more matter. As we read Matthew 18, we note that our Savior used the singular, "thy brother," "let him be unto thee." In excommunication we are dealing with an individual. We excommunicate only individuals, not entire groups, not whole church bodies.

### **Romans 16 Applicable Also to Groups**

As we, however, read Romans 16, we see that the plural is used. What we have here is applicable not only to individuals, but also to groups. If one individual persists in error, he is to be avoided. But also if an entire group, a church body, persists in its erroneous confession, the avoiding is to be applied to it. Such avoiding does not pass judgment upon the personal faith of any individual within the group, but it is testimony also to each individual that by his membership he, too, is involved in the error in which his group persists.

### **Always an Earnest Testimony and Warning Against Error**

Is the avoiding of Romans 16 then the same as excommunication? Not necessarily. Excommunication excludes an impenitent sinner from the Christian congregation as an unbeliever and is applicable only to individuals. The avoiding of Romans 16 does not necessarily pass judgment upon anyone's personal faith, but it always expresses itself against the departure from God's Word that is taught and defended; it testifies against persistent error, also of an entire church body, and is an earnest warning against the dangers involved in any departure from Scripture.

How then are we to look upon Lutherans that are not members of a synod with whom we are in fellowship? We do not pass judgment upon their personal faith. We do not deny the presence of many sincere Christians in these bodies. But the errors in the bodies with which they are

associated do not permit us to practice religious fellowship with them. Although we will rejoice over whatever Gospel preaching is done and heard in their midst, their errors do not permit us, according to Scripture, to join in worship and church work with them as Christian brethren. But we look forward with longing to the day when Christ will gather all His own from everywhere to the perfect fellowship that shall be enjoyed with Him and with all the fellow redeemed in heaven, throughout eternity.

## V

### **Does Matthew 7:1 Prohibit All Judging?**

Our Savior says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). Does He in these words condemn all judging? Our Synod has passed judgment and rejected the teaching and practice of the Missouri Synod in certain matters in which we are convinced they are departing from the Scriptures. Is that forbidden by the words of our Savior? We are also reminded of the time the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery to Jesus and asked whether she should be stoned. Jesus told them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Since no one is without sin, does that mean that Jesus prohibits all condemning of evil? Is it "casting the first stone," is it unwarranted judging to reject and condemn false doctrine and practice?

### **God Calls for Judging of Error and the Errorist**

In the same chapter in which Jesus says "judge not," we hear Him saying: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:15-20). With these words Jesus tells us to judge, to examine and condemn whatever is wrong. St. John writes: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). When God tells us to "try the spirits," that is, to put them to a test, to examine them, He calls for judging. We are to examine them and reject error. Again when John writes: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 10, 11), it is obvious that this calls for judging the doctrine of those who come to determine whether they are to be received or not. When St. Paul writes: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6), this calls for judging of words as to whether they are vain or not. Of the Bereans it is reported in the Book of Acts: "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (17:11). This involved passing judgment on the basis of the Holy Scriptures upon the preaching they heard. If upon examination they would have found that Paul preached falsely to them, they would very correctly have rejected him with his preaching.

Clearly, Jesus did not have this kind of judging in mind when He said: "Judge not." Rather than prohibiting it, He commands it. Regarding false teachers we are told: Examine, beware, do not receive, avoid. In the face of this, if a church body fails to do this, if it sees false doctrine and practice and does not judge in the matter, does not warn against it and finally avoid the persistent errorist, it fails to do the very thing God is looking for.

### **A Warning Against a Party Spirit in Judging**

However, the words of Christ to which we referred in the first paragraph do contain warnings it will be well to take note of. The scribes and Pharisees who brought the adulterous woman to Christ, who judged and condemned her, had little thought for her welfare. They were not concerned about bringing her to repentance. When they said to Jesus: "Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" it was not concern for the woman that moved them to ask this. Nor was it concern for the truth. They were using her case to test Christ and to find something of which they might accuse Him. Behind their whole action lay a party spirit that was out to condemn Christ.

When false doctrine and practice is judged and condemned, this is not to proceed out of party spirit. It is not to flow out of a spirit that wants to prove one synod as right and the other synod as wrong. It must proceed from a deep love for the truth of God's Word. It should be done with a deep concern for the one who is erring. The aim is not to be destruction, but correction.

### **A Warning Against Self-Righteousness in Judging**

Jesus' words also serve to warn us against judging with a self-righteous spirit. Christ's warning against trying to correct another while not seeing one's own faults also is a warning against self-righteousness. It is a warning against concerning oneself only with the faults of others and ignoring and excusing one's own faults.

When we are told to try the spirits whether they are of God, we are to do that with true humility, not with any feeling of superiority, but always testing and examining ourselves by the same standards that we use towards others. As we let the bright rays of God's Word shine upon ourselves, we shall be conscious of too many sins and failings of our own to become self-righteous when we need to judge and condemn the false doctrine and practice that God's Word reveals in others.

So doctrine and practice is to be judged. Error is to be rejected and condemned. The errorist is to be avoided. That is the will of God. But let it all proceed from a spirit of love for the truth and for the salvation of souls. Let it proceed from a humble spirit that recognizes its own weaknesses yet finds strength from the Word of God to resist error.

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