

LEXICAL NOTES* toward the Bible studies at
Craigville Theological Colloquy XXI, 12-16 July 03

* On all the Bible's uses of "sound teaching"
as background for the Bible studies on the Lord's Prayer

"SOUND TEACHING IN A SICK WORLD"

NOTE ON TITLE: The Planning Committee agreed on the biblical phrase "Sound Teaching," then discussed how to finish the title. At the 10.20.03 meeting (not all members being present), the Committee unanimously decided to honor the phrase's biblical metaphor by evoking its antonym in the title's concluding phrase. As I write this, the concluding phrase may be changed for reasons extraneous to Scripture, but the Bible studies will bear the title agreed on in the meeting. As far as I know, no one has objected to what was also agreed on, namely that the health/sickness metaphor should pervade the Bible studies on the Lord's Prayer.

1 "I take the Bible too seriously to take it literally": I've noticed that Bible-lazy people who repeat this quarter-truth take "God is love" literally, as literally as those they mock take "the wrath of God." If we do indeed take the Bible seriously, we shall be serious about its language-depth (as was Jon. Edwards when by his 10th birthday he had a reading knowledge of our religion's basic languages--Hebrew, Greek, & Latin: some folks are surprised to discover that the heart of his "angry God" sermon is the divine love). Language-depth, including the metaphors which ground, in Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek words, all the Bible's feelings & ideas.

When I was asked to present Bible studies on "sound teaching," taking the Bible seriously meant that I was locked into the health/sickness metaphor which grounds all the Bible's usages of this phrase. I did not make a choice of this metaphor: I chose to take the Bible seriously when I was given the word-group "sound teaching."

2 For those who bypassed the arduous learning of the biblical languages, I taught a course titled "The [metaphoric] Roots of the [Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek] Roots." Language roots in life, invisible ("heart") life roots in visible ("flesh") life: your physical memories of bodily sicknesses/illnesses/pains/wounds/suffering--together with their metaphoric transphysical ("spiritual") counterparts--constitute your basic equipment/organism for hermeneutics (i.e., interpreting what others say/write//said/wrote). If you are hearing/reading in the same language as the speaker/writer, you are available to its metaphoric resonances: you might not feel/think "health" when reading "sound teaching" (since the Eng. "sound" has meanings additional to "healthy"), but you could not read the original (with the Gk. rt. ὑγι- *hugi-* [Eng. translit. "hygiene"; goddess of health/happiness "Hygeia"]) without at least subliminal awareness of the health/sickness metaphor--so in all the Bible's "sound teaching" passages, all in the Pastorals: 1Ti.1.10, 6.3; 2Ti.1.13, 4.3; Tit.1.9, 2.1,8.

3 A "meta-phor" trans-fers (Lat., "carries over," the meaning of the Gk. "meta-phor"), by vehicle (e.g., the "sickness/health" image), a tenor (e.g., teaching as "true/false")--as epiphor (e.g., lamb/Lamb of God [Jesus carried "on" lamb]) or diaphor (e.g., word/enfleshed Word, Jn.1.14 [the incarnation carried "through" word]). As a leaping "across" (trans-) from earth to heaven, every type of theological language (for the Trans-cendent) is metaphorical. If you think of images (metaphors) as balls & ideas as blocks, theology arranges blocks with balls inside them (math is blocks, poetry is balls with blocks inside them).

The metaphor "Father" overarches & interpenetrates the Lord's Prayer, and the Colloquy's three Bible studies use the Pastorals' sickness/health metaphor as a vehicle for carrying the prayer's message to "the world as we know it"; so, "The Lord's Prayer as Sound Teaching and Diagnostic Manual" "in a Sick World." Health/sickness is a major concern of Scripture, & as a metaphor is can illumine many passages--such as the Lord's Prayer--in which the metaphor does not occur. (This trans-position of metaphor is itself a metaphorical move, & can enrich biblical exposition.)

4 While the NT uses "healing" Gk.rts. (Eng. "THERAPy" & "psychIAtry"), the only root it uses to modify "teaching" (or "doctrine")--viz., "hugi-"--means "healthy" (not health-giving, healing): teaching is either healthy or sick (with, of course but unstated in the contexts of "sound teaching", corresponding effects). In 1Ti.6.3-4, the contrast is explicit: "healthy" in v.3, "sick" (νοσ- *nos-*) in v.4 ("their minds

* "Wholesome" in all Eng. translations/versions before 1881, when RV started "sound"--continued in RSV & NRSV.

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sick" [CEV/95], [THE MESSAGE/93] spreading "germs"--cp. "NOSology," disease-categorizing). While the Pastorals' central concern is true/false (healthy/sick) teaching, a concern throughout, this chap. (1Ti.6) concentrates the burden. Healthy doctrine/teaching is (v.21) "faith" as content, the gospel message (not one's own conviction: 3.9; 4.1; 5.8); & it correlates with healthy character (v.12 REB/89: "justice, piety, integrity, love, fortitude, and gentleness"). And the "sick" (v.5) is, in the next v., reinforced by the "corrupt" ("decayed," as bodily decay in 2Cor.4.16) or "depraved" mind. (In the Hellenistic world, body/soul dualism comported well with body/mind unity--as in the Roman gnome *mens sana corpus sanum* [a sound mind in a sound body--"sn" being the root of both Lat. "san-" & Eng. "sound": this rt. paralleling Gk. "hugi"--both meaning whole-aware-of-part, healthy-aware-of-sick, firm-in-contrast-to-flimsy, strong-in-contrast-to-weak].) * And "sane"!

Wholeness/health are linguistically intimate--each a metaphor of the other--in Hebrew/Greek/Latin/English. English: A-S/OE "hal" appears in "health," "whole" (& of course "hale"). Hebrew: *bara* means both to "create" (in Gn.1.1, the whole) & to "be fat, healthy" (though some argue for separate roots, as in Arabic); & *shalom* ("peace, prosperity, total health-&-welfare" [Jer.29.7]); & *yasha'* ("make space/room, give breadth/width"; metaphor., "give victory/deliver/save/liberate/rescue [from prison/enemies/disease/death]"; "be victorious, live in abundance"; proper name, *yeshua* "Joshua/Jesus"; noun, "Savior"). (Jesus in 1Ti.6.3: the "healthy ["hugi-"] words [i.e. teaching]" "of our Lord Jesus Christ" [as known in the Gospels, I think; or proto-Gospels].) Greek & Latin closeness of wholeness/health, in the contiguous ¶ above.

My guess is that most languages have a word comprehending wholeness/health & the ideal condition (Eng., "AOK [All OK]." German, "gesund" (I-E rt. "sn"); Hawaiian, "aloha." In all languages I know of, "sound" physical health is an essential element in this blissful picture. So in many languages, letters begin with the equivalent of "Be well" ("hugi-" in Gk. papyri), & frequently end so also. Also Gk. papyri; goods arrive "safely," only bricks "in good condition" are to be re-used, somebody's not "in your senses" (our "out of your mind"), a wife hopes her husband will get back home "uninjured," see that everything's "rightly" attended to, grain is sown "in good faith," a politician is to use tax money "honestly." Modern Gk. *[hu]giano* is "I heal, cure."

5 C.K.Barrett (THE PASTORAL EPISTLES, Ox/63) puts the situation simply: "The orthodox [vs. heterodox] faith" is presented as "wholesome teaching": "Teaching plays a large part in Church life, and healthiness provides an admirable metaphor for the clean and energetic wholeness of Christian life inculcated in these Epistles."

6 This Colloquy's subtitle directs attention to church leadership, for which the Pastorals is (in three-letter form) a training manual (as was, United Church Press 40 years ago, THE PASTORAL LETTERS [Willis E. Elliott and Willard W. Wetzel]). So little (as well as so much) has changed these 40 years! The nosology (remember? list of sick [teachings]) has had to add radical feminism & in-your-face "gay pride" & polemics of Hindic (Hindu & Buddhist) & Arab (Islamic) promoters, but the forms of Western atheism/hedonism/individualism/collectivism have changed little.

In/through the Pastorals, what can we see of the sick teaching this sound teacher was warning against? Let's see it in the contexts of the "hugi-" passages in order. 1.10: anomic (lawless), "flouts" healthy teaching." 6.3: "sick enthusiasm for mere speculations and quibbles," "corrupt minds who've lost their grip on truth." 2Ti.1.13: attackers of "the outline of healthy teaching, the treasure put into our charge." 4.3: "each will follow his own whim and gather a crowd of teachers to tickle his fancy" & "turn to fables." Ti.1.9: money-hungry pushers of "Jewish myths and human commandments," who "turn their backs on the truth." 2.1,8: lacking in mouth/life "integrity and seriousness." Other passages: 1.3-4 (myths/genealogies/speculation); vs.5-6 (malnutrition ["lack"] of love/pure heart/good conscience/genuine faith; a wilderness of words); 4.1-5 (forbid marriage & meat-eating); 4.7 (myths, tales); 6.20 (false "gnosis" [in contrast to true "epignosis": 1Ti.2.4; 2Ti.2.25, 3.7; Tit.1.1]); 2Ti.2.14 (useless "logomachies"), 16 ("godless"), 17 ("spread like gangrene"), 18 ("our resurrection has already taken place"); 3.4: ("loved their passions more than their God"); Tit.3.9 ("controversies over the Law").