

"FREE GRACE" THEOLOGY: 6 WAYS GRUDEM
MISREPRESENTS BIBLICAL REPENTANCE

A Paper

Presented to



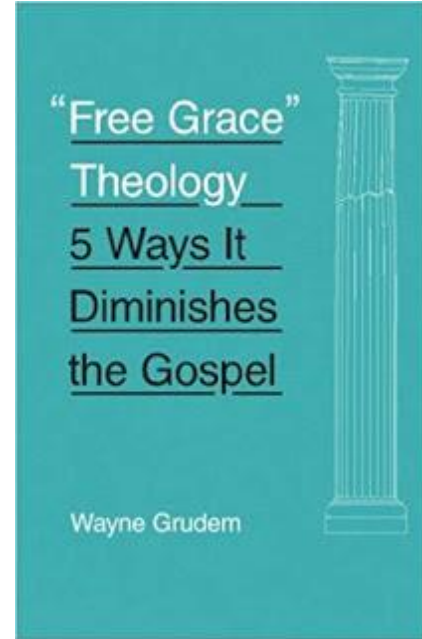
Grace Research Room

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Introduction

Reformed theologian and author Wayne Grudem has some interesting arguments that he uses to try to convince people that repentance in the Bible does not simply mean "a change of mind". Grudem says that true repentance must also include remorse, contrition, self-reproach, and making a life change for the better (which he defines as better conduct), or at least a resolve to do so "as a result of remorse or contrition for one's sins." I was reading his book *"Free*



Grace" Theology: 5 Ways It Diminishes the Gospel (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016) on google books because it came up in the search results (I did purchase the book but "FOR REFERENCE ONLY!"), and I must say that at first Grudem almost had me believing that Charles Bing just had no lexical support for his "change of mind" definition of repentance. Grudem made it sound like Charles Bing was taking statements from the Greek lexicons out of context. But when I looked up a few of the lexical examples cited by Grudem, I found that it was Grudem who was quoting the lexicons very selectively and taking statements out of context! Here are six examples of how Wayne Grudem misrepresents Biblical repentance:

1.) Grudem misrepresents Bauer's lexicon.

In his book *'Free Grace' Theology: 5 Ways It Diminishes the Gospel*, Grudem makes the following statements in his critique of Free Grace theology. Grudem claims

that Charles Bing's citation of Bauer's lexicon in support of the "change of mind" meaning of *metanoēō* is "misrepresenting the entry on *metanoēō* in the BAGD lexicon" (p. 59). Grudem goes on to say that Charles Bing "repeatedly fails to account for the fact that no standard lexicon or other reference work on the meanings of Greek words in the New Testament supports his understanding of *metanoēō* and *metanoia* in these passages." (p. 64.) This is a bold claim! But is this really the case? Let's take a close look at Bauer's lexicon (third edition) to see if what Grudem says is accurate or if maybe he's the one who is actually misrepresenting Bauer's lexicon!

The first definition listed in Bauer's lexicon for the verb *metanoēō* (repent) is "change one's mind". The first example Bauer cites for the "change of mind" definition of *metanoēō* is from *The Shepherd of Hermas* (abbreviated as "Hv 3, 7, 3" in the lexicon). This is important because *The Shepherd of Hermas* is not secular literature, nor is it pre-Christian. Instead, *The Shepherd of Hermas* is Christian literature. Is it early or late Christian literature? It was written in the mid second century (c. 140 AD). In fact, one author dates it to have been written "about 90–110 A.D." (See Charles H. Hoole, *The Shepherd of Hermas* [London: Rivingtons, 1870], Introduction, p. x.) Related to this, it was the opinion of Origen (186–253 A.D.) that *The Shepherd of Hermas* was written by the "Hermas" to whom the apostle Paul sends his greetings in his letter to the Romans, chapter 16, verse 14. If the Gospel of John was written between 90-100 AD as many Bible scholars believe, then *The Shepherd of Hermas* was written very close to the same time. So *The Shepherd of Hermas* is not just Christian literature; it's *early* Christian literature written at about the same time as (or at most only about 50 years after) when parts of the New Testament were written. *The Shepherd of Hermas* is

nearly contemporary with the New Testament and was widely read by many of the early Christians. What's more, some of the early Christians such as "Clement of Alexandria (193–217 A.D.) evidently considered the book to have been inspired." (Ibid., pp. xi-xii.) I'm not arguing that *The Shepherd of Hermas* is inspired nor am I saying that it should be included in the New Testament. My point is simply that *The Shepherd of Hermas* is early Christian literature written close to the same time as when the New Testament was written and thus it is very important because, as one author puts it, "it carries us back into the very earliest period of Christian antiquity, and dealing with religious subjects in a more familiar way than is found in the works of the other ecclesiastical writers of the Apostolic period, it is most valuable as supplying a specimen of the ordinary tone of thought and feeling in the early Church." (Ibid., pp. x-xi.) *The Shepherd of Hermas* is important in helping us today to understand the meaning of *metanoēō* (the verb repent) and *metanoia* (the noun repentance) because it shows how the Greek-speaking Christians of the early church were using these words. It shows that the early Christians were using the word *metanoēō* in a religious context and in the sense of "a change of mind"! So for Bauer to exclude every New Testament use of *metanoēō* from having this meaning is suspect and may show a theological bias or a double-standard. Why does *metanoēō* mean "change one's mind" in *The Shepherd of Hermas* but not anywhere in the New Testament? But I don't think that's what Bauer is saying at all.

Grudem is correct to point out that Bauer does not list any New Testament passages immediately under the "change one's mind" meaning for the verb *metanoēō*, but that doesn't tell the whole story. What Grudem fails to tell his readers is that Bauer does in fact list many New Testament passages under the "change of mind" definition

for the cognate noun *metanoia* (together with the verb *metanoēō* in parenthesis) on the very same page of the lexicon! (See page 640 in Bauer's lexicon.) Grudem in his book actually references the cognate noun *metanoia* on page 640 of Bauer's lexicon, but only to say in a tiny footnote at the bottom of the page (p. 57) that "under the cognate noun *metanoia*, 'repentance,' [Bauer gives] this explanation: 'in our literature with focus on the need of change in view of responsibility to deity' (640)." So Grudem conveniently fails to mention that in the lexical entry for the noun *metanoia*, Bauer includes the verb *metanoēō* together with the noun and classifies them both as having the meaning of "primarily a change of mind"! Here is the actual statement in Bauer's lexicon (I transcribed the Greek letters into English):

"**metanoia, as, ē** (*metanoēō*) prim. 'a change of mind' (Thu. 3, 36, 4; Polyb. 4, 66, 7;...[etc.]) **repentance, turning about, conversion**; as a turning away *metanoia apo nekrōn ergōn turning away from dead works* **Hb 6:1**. Mostly of the positive side of repentance, as the beginning of a new relationship with God: *ē eis theou m[etanoian]. repentance that leads to God* **Ac 20:21**. *axia tēs metanoias erga deeds that are consistent with repentance* **26:20**. Also *karton axion tēs m[etanoias]. [fruit worthy of repentance]* **Mt 3:8**; cp. **Lk 3:8**." etc.

Under this very heading, Bauer goes on to list many more examples from the New Testament, including some of the very same New Testament passages which he had previously listed as examples for the verb *metanoēō*, such as Luke 15:7 and Acts 26:20.

Additionally, Bauer also includes under this same heading (and interspersed with the New Testament references) many more citations from *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

So Grudem's entire argument that Bauer doesn't list any New Testament passages under the "change one's mind" definition of *metanoēō* falls flat and doesn't hold up under close scrutiny because Bauer lists many New Testament references under the cognate noun *metanoia*, (together with the verb *metanoēō* immediately following in parenthesis) where both together are given the meaning of "primarily 'a change of mind'".

2.) Grudem misrepresents the lexicon by Moulton and Milligan.

Grudem makes it sound like the Moulton and Milligan lexicon doesn't support the "change of mind" definition of repentance. Grudem writes: "The specialized lexicon by Moulton and Milligan, compiled with particular reference to the papyri and other nonliterary sources, says of *metanoēō* that 'in the New Testament it is more than 'repent,' and indicates a complete change of attitude, spiritual and moral, towards God.'" But Grudem omits the entire first part of that quote which gives the basic meaning of *metanoēō*: a "change of mind"! Notice what Moulton and Milligan say concerning the meaning of *metanoēō* which Grudem left out:

See also *Menandrea* p. 12⁷² where the verb is used of "change of mind." Its meaning deepens with Christianity, and in the NT it is more than "repent," and indicates a complete change of attitude, spiritual and moral, towards God.¹

The Moulton and Milligan lexicon *doesn't* say that the meaning of *metanoēō* changes with Christianity; it says the word's meaning "deepens with Christianity." What's more, when the Moulton and Milligan lexicon says that the meaning of *metanoēō* in the New Testament is more than "repent," all they're saying is that our English word "repent" is not the best translation of *metanoēō*. They are saying that our English word "repent" does not fully express the meaning of the Greek word. This is exactly the point made by Charles Bing and other Free Grace theologians! For example, in *The Theological Wordbook* (edited by such stalwarts of the faith as John F. Walvoord, Donald K. Campbell, Wendel Johnston, and John Whitmer) they write this on page 296 concerning the word Repentance: "the English word repentance derives from the Latin and does not express the exact meaning of *metanoia*." To be more specific, when the Moulton and Milligan lexicon says that the meaning of *metanoēō* "deepens with Christianity, and in the NT it is more than 'repent,'" - it means more than repent (in the sense of regret), i.e. *metanoēō* is more than a synonym of *metamelomai* (see the definition for *metamelomai*, "regret," in the Moulton and Milligan lexicon where they define *metamelomai* as meaning "repent oneself").

I want to make another point regarding what Moulton and Milligan say in their lexicon concerning the meaning of *metanoēō*. Apparently Grudem imports his own definition of repentance into the words "a complete change of attitude," but is that justified? How should we understand the word "attitude" when the Moulton and Milligan lexicon says "a complete change of attitude"? Should we import Grudem's definition of repentance into the word "attitude" or should we define the word "attitude" according to

its own meaning? The Merriam-Webster dictionary says that the word "attitude" means "a mental position with regard to a fact or state." (The word "attitude" can include feelings or emotions, but that is not the primary meaning of the word.) Thus, when the Moulton and Milligan lexicon says "a complete change of attitude," it is simply another way of saying *a complete "change of mind," spiritual and moral (e.g. a recognition of one's sin, and need for salvation, etc.), towards God.*

I want to make one last point, and this has to do with what the Moulton and Milligan lexicon says concerning the noun *metanoia* ("repentance"). Under the entry for *metanoia* (page 404), the concluding remarks are these: "It may be added that Lactantius (*Div. Inst.* vi. 24. 6) for the ordinary *paenitentia* ['repentance'] of Christian Latinity prefers *resipiscentia* [to recover one's senses], as implying, like *μετάνοια* [*metanoia*], a coming to one's senses, resulting in a change of conduct." The Moulton and Milligan lexicon correctly distinguishes between repentance and what repentance results in, which is a change of conduct.

3.) Grudem misrepresents the Greek lexicon by J. H. Thayer.

Grudem also makes it sound like Thayer's lexicon doesn't support the "change of mind" definition of biblical repentance. But after I looked up in Thayer's lexicon the definition of *metanoēō* (repent), I noticed that once again Grudem only selectively quoted the pertinent lexical material! The very first definition Thayer gives for the verb *metanoēō* is "*to change one's mind, i.e. to repent*".² The same is true for the noun *metanoia* (repentance). The very first definition for *metanoia* in Thayer's lexicon

is: "a change of mind: as it appears in one who repents of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done".³ This is the most basic and fundamental meaning of the two words. Furthermore, in both instances Thayer makes a distinction between repentance and the fruit of repentance, which is "conduct worthy of a heart changed"⁴ or in other words "good deeds"⁵ (cf. Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20).

Interestingly, Grudem also fails to mention the word of caution given by the publishers of Thayer's own lexicon (see the "PUBLISHERS INTRODUCTION," page VII) when they say: "A word of caution is necessary. Thayer was a Unitarian, and the errors of this sect occasionally come through in the explanatory notes....When defining μεταμέλομαι [*metamelomai*: to regret, to have remorse], Thayer refuses to draw a clear distinction between this word and μετανοέω [*metanoēō*: to change one's mind].

Underlying this refusal is the view that man is inherently good, needing Christ not as a Savior but only as an example." When Grudem cited Thayer and selectively quoted Thayer's definition of *metanoēō*, Grudem issued no such "word of caution". But this "word of caution" is important and necessary because Thayer's definition of *metanoēō* is suspect because he co-mingled *metanoēō* and *metamelomai* and did not properly distinguish between them. In fact, after Thayer's entry for *metamelomai*, he calls the two words synonyms. The unsaved man does not need to repent in the sense of "feel sorry and try better" (as Thayer and Grudem imply). The unsaved man needs to repent in the sense of "change his mind" and trust Christ as Savior!

4.) Grudem misrepresents New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson.

In his book Grudem takes issue with the fact that Charles Bing quoted A. T. Robertson in support of the view that *metanoia* has the basic meaning of a "change of mind". Grudem focuses on statements from Robertson on 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, but really the focus should be on Robertson's statements concerning *metanoēō* in Matthew 3:2 which is the first mention of the word in the New Testament. In the past, Grudem has made Matthew 3:2 the focus, such as in a lecture he gave at Phoenix Seminary titled "Salvation without Repentance from Sin: A Critique of the Free Grace Gospel". (By the way, the title of Grudem's lecture is somewhat misleading because only non-traditional Free Grace adherents of Zane Hodges say that repentance is not necessary for salvation, the traditional Free Grace view is that repentance from the sin of unbelief *is* necessary for salvation like the Bible says in John 16:8-9 and in Hebrews 6:1 where the unsaved need to change their minds and transfer their trust from whatever they were trusting in before salvation and trust only in Christ for salvation.) Grudem made a statement in that lecture in which he said something to the effect that "John the Baptist never called on people to change their minds." (Grudem was arguing against the "change of mind" definition of repentance.) But A. T. Robertson in his book *Word Pictures in the New Testament* gives the following commentary on Matthew 3:2, where John the Baptist called on people to "repent":

Repent (*metanoēite*). Broadus used to say that this is the worst translation in the New Testament. The trouble is that the English word "repent" means "to be sorry again" from the Latin *repenitet* (impersonal). John did not call on the people to

be sorry, but to change (think afterwards) their mental attitudes (*metanoieite*) and conduct. The Vulgate has it "do penance" and Wycliff has followed that. The Old Syriac has it better: "Turn ye." The French (Geneva) has it "Amendez vous." This is John's great word (Bruce) and it has been hopelessly mistranslated. The tragedy of it is that we have no one English word that reproduces exactly the meaning and atmosphere of the Greek word.⁶

Contrary to what Wayne Grudem would have us believe, A. T. Robertson says that the word repent means "to change (think afterwards) their mental attitudes (*metanoieite*)" - Robertson adds "and conduct." But the words "and conduct" come *after* he had already defined what it means to repent. Robertson keeps the two ideas separate and so should we. A change of conduct should follow and is expected to follow, but according to the Bible a change of behavior is the "fruit" of repentance (see Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20), not repentance itself. A. T. Robertson affirms: "Certainly the word for repentance [*metanoia*] is more than a mere 'after-thought.' It is a 'change of mind' that lead to and is shown by a change of life, 'fruits worthy of repentance' (Luke 3:8)." (*The Minister And His Greek New Testament* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923], p. 54.) Robertson's statement here is consistent with how classic Free Grace theology has traditionally understood the relationship between faith and works, justification and sanctification. For example, Charles Ryrie in his book *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989, p. 45) writes: "Every Christian will bear spiritual fruit. Somewhere, sometime, somehow. Otherwise the person is not a believer. Every born-again individual will be fruitful. Not to be fruitful is to be faithless, without faith, and therefore without salvation."

5.) Grudem misrepresents Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof.

Grudem quotes Louis Berkhof at length in an attempt to show that Berkhoff does not offer supporting comments for Bing's "change of mind" understanding of repentance. Grudem argues that "Berkhof repeatedly emphasizes that a turning from former sins and turning to a new way of life is essential in the meaning of the word [*metanoia*]". But Berkhof does not actually say this. Here's what Grudem admits that Berkhoff does say concerning *metanoia*: "In the New Testament...it denotes primarily a change of mind, taking a wiser view of the past, including regret for the ill then done [i.e. past regret which led to repentance, cf. 2 Cor. 7:9-10], and **leading to** a change of life for the better." [emphasis mine] I put emphasis on the words "leading to" because here again we must be careful not to confuse repentance with what repentance leads to: the "fruit" of repentance (see Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20). It's true that whenever there has been "a change of life for the better" it was preceded and effected by repentance; repentance led to the change of life for the better. So, the Free Grace "change of mind" understanding of repentance can accept Berkhof's definition of repentance. Grudem goes on to quote Berkhof as saying that true repentance includes a "moral consciousness". Yes, like Adam and Eve after they ate the forbidden fruit, unsaved people must understand that they are sinners who have sinned! This is part of the gospel (see 1 Corinthians 15:3). Grudem also quotes Berkhof as saying: "To be converted, is not merely to pass from one conscious direction to another, but to do it with a clearly perceived aversion to the former direction." I can agree with Berkhof's statement in this sense, that in order to be converted a person realizes that he or she is

headed toward a Christ-less eternity, and has "a clearly perceived aversion to the former direction" of going to that Christ-less eternity. They see their need for a Savior and trust in Christ alone to save them from sin, death, and Hell.

Thus, Berkhof's statements on *metanoia* pose no real problem to a Free Grace understanding of repentance. They are "supporting comments" to Charles Bing's "change of mind" understanding of repentance in at least three ways: (A) Berkhof repeatedly emphasizes that "the word [*metanoia*] denotes primarily a change of mind". (B) Berkhof says: "In the English Bible the word is translated 'repentance' but this rendering hardly does justice to the original, since it gives undue prominence to the emotional element." (C) Berkhof traces how the Greek word *metanoia* has been mistranslated down through the centuries of church history and concludes his remarks by saying:

Sad to say, the Church gradually lost sight of the original meaning of *metanoia*. In Latin theology Lactantius rendered it '*resipiscentia*,' a becoming-wise-again, as if the word were derived from *meta* and *anoia*, and denoted a return from madness or folly. The majority of Latin writers, however, preferred to render it '*poenitentia*' a word that denotes the sorrow and regret which follows when one has made a mistake or has committed an error of any kind. This word [*poenitentia*] passed into the Vulgate as the rendering of *metanoia*, and, under the influence of the Vulgate, the English translators rendered the Greek word by 'repentance,' thus stressing the emotional element and making *metanoia* equivalent to *metameleia* [as Thayer was prone to do in his lexicon].

In some cases, the deterioration went even farther. The Roman Catholic Church externalized the idea of repentance in its sacrament of penance so that the *metanoieite* of the Greek New Testament (Matt. 3:2) became *poenitentiam agite*, --'do penance,' in the Latin Version.

Grudem in his book never mentions these statements by Berkhof!

6.) Grudem misrepresents standard lexicons and other reference works on the meanings of Greek words in the New Testament.

Grudem claims that Bing "repeatedly fails to account for the fact that no standard lexicon or reference work on the meanings of Greek words in the New Testament supports his understanding of *metanoēō* and *metanoia* in these passages." What Grudem claims is a "fact" is not a fact but a misrepresentation. Contrary to what Grudem would have us believe, there are standard lexicons and reference works on the meanings of Greek words in the New Testament that support Bing's understanding of *metaneō* and *metanoia* as used in the New Testament. Besides the examples cited above (and at the risk of being superfluous), I will list several more examples:

- Sir Anthony Bottoms (1939-present) of Cambridge University points out the following facts: "A characterization of repentance as 'turning around' is certainly not the only interpretation available within the Christian tradition; but, equally, it is not an eccentric understanding within the tradition. To illustrate this point, consider the Greek words *metanoēō* (a verb) and *metanoia* (a noun), which in English versions of the New Testament are usually translated

'to repent' and 'repentance'. **There is a consensus in modern scholarship that the core meaning of *metanoia* is simply 'a change of mind or purpose'**. To take a prominent example of how the word is used, in the Gospel of Mark the first words attributed to Jesus at the beginning of his ministry are: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent [*metanoete*], and believe the good news'. As the context suggests, the main action for which this statement calls is a change of mind or purpose in response to the radically new situation described." The author goes on to cite the following Greek lexicons in support of his statements above: "A modern edition of a classical Greek-English Lexicon offers definitions as follows: *metanoia*: 'change of mind or heart', 'repentance', 'regret', and possibly 'afterthought'; *metanoēō*: 'to perceive afterwards or too late', 'to change one's mind or purpose' and 'to repent [of]': H G Liddell, R Scott and H S Jones (eds) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968) at 1115. See also the definitions in FW Danker (ed), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edn (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000) at 640: *metanoia*: primarily 'a change of mind', also 'repentance, turning around, conversion'; *metanoēō*: (i) change one's mind, (ii) feel remorse, repent, be converted."⁷

- In *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1897) commentary on 2 Corinthians 7:9, the Rev. J. J. Lias writes (p. 84): "It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the Greek word translated

repentance (*penance*, Wiclif and the Rhemish Version) contains neither the idea of sorrow nor of penitential discipline. The word means *change of mind* or *purpose*. Sorrow may or may not accompany it."

- The New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson (1863-1934) writes:
"Certainly the word for repentance [*metanoia*] is more than a mere 'after-thought.' It is a 'change of mind' that lead to and is shown by a change of life, 'fruits worthy of repentance' (Luke 3:8)." (*The Minister And His Greek New Testament* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923], p. 54.) Robertson's statement here is consistent with how classic Free Grace theology has traditionally understood the relationship between faith and works, justification and sanctification. For example, Charles Ryrie in his book *So Great Salvation* (p. 45) writes: "Every Christian will bear spiritual fruit. Somewhere, sometime, somehow. Otherwise the person is not a believer. Every born-again individual will be fruitful. Not to be fruitful is to be faithless, without faith, and therefore without salvation."
- The Greek scholar Dr. Julius R. Mantey (1890-1981) gives the following definition of repentance under the heading "*Meaning of Repentance and Conversion in the New Testament.*" Mantey writes: "*Metanoeo* (*metanoia*, noun) is regularly used to express the requisite state of mind necessary for the forgiveness of sin. It means to think differently or to have a different attitude toward sin and God, etc."⁸

- The Scottish Bible scholar Alexander Souter (1873-1949) gives the following definitions for *metanoēō* (repent) and *metanoia* (repentance) in his reference work *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Souter writes:

"*metanoēō*, I change my mind, I change the inner man (particularly with reference to acceptance of the will of God by the *nous* (mind) instead of rejection)". Concerning the noun repentance, Souter writes: "*metanoia*, a change of mind, a change in the inner man".⁹
- George Abbot-Smith (1864-1947), formerly professor of Hellenistic Greek at McGill University, gives the following definitions for *metanoēō* and *metanoia* in his reference work *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*. Abbot-Smith writes: "*metanoēō*...to change one's mind or purpose, hence, to repent; in NT (exc. Lk 17^{3, 4}), of repentance from sin [fundamentally *unbelief*, Jn. 16:8-9], involving amendment [i.e. a change of heart for the better]". Concerning the noun *metanoia*, Abbot-Smith writes: "*metanoia*...after-thought, change of mind, repentance".¹⁰
- In *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), the Rev. C. I. Scofield gives the following note on the word "repent" in Acts 17:30. Scofield writes: "Repentance is the trans. of a Gr. word (*metanoia*--*metanoēō*) meaning 'to have another mind,' 'to change the mind,' and is used in the N.T. to indicate a change of mind in respect of sin, of God, and of self. This change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen

into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor. 7. 8-11), but sorrow for sin, though it may 'work' repentance, is not repentance. The son in Mt. 21. 28, 29 illustrates true repentance."

- The *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1892) by the German Protestant theologian Hermann Cremer (1834-1903) gives the following definitions for *metanoēō* and *metanoia*. Concerning the verb *metanoēō*, Cremer writes: "Μετανοέω, the opposite of προνοεῖν [to consider in advance, i.e. to perceive beforehand], a word not often occurring in profane Greek, combines two meanings of the preposition, *to think differently after....*But usually to change one's mind, or opinion....In the N.T., especially by St. Luke and in the Revelation, it denotes a change of moral thought and reflection....without addition [i.e. without any prepositions modifying it] = to repent in a moral and religious sense" (pp. 440-441). Concerning the noun *metanoia*, Cremer gives this definition: "μετάνοια, ἡ, change of mind, repentance....In the N.T., and especially in Luke, corresponding with μετανοεῖν [to repent], it is = repentance, with reference to νοῦς [mind, intellect, thought] as the faculty of moral reflection" (p. 441).
- The Rev. J. Oswald Jackson (1820-1901) in his critical dissertation on the Greek word *metanoia* titled *REPENTANCE: OR THE CHANGE OF MIND NECESSARY FOR SALVATION CONSIDERED*, clearly demonstrates that this understanding of *metanoia* as being "a change of mind" does not stand

on questionable or even new ground, but is instead the Scriptural doctrine and correct understanding of the word repentance as well as the testimony of biblical critics and scholars alike, so much so that the author can confidently say: "I may remark that all the critics and commentators that I have been able to examine, give the same signification to *μετάνοια*, *metanoia*, rendered *repentance*, with unanimous voice declaring that it signifies *change of mind*. Thus is it translated by POOLE, KUINOEL, DR. BLOOMFIELD, DR. ROBINSON, SCOTT, DODDRIDGE, ADAM CLARKE, M'CLEAN, PRINCIPAL CAMPBELL, DR. HENDERSON, BARNES, BENSON, DR. JOHN CAMPBELL, ROBINSON of Leicester, and the Author of THE MARROW OF MODERN DIVINITY" - also MATTHEW HENRY, the worthy JOHN BROWN of Haddington, and many others in addition to these.¹¹

- Even Martin Luther, quoting the Greek scholars of his day, acknowledges that the basic meaning of *metanoia* in the New Testament is a change of mind, or "coming to one's right mind". In a letter to John von Staupitz, dated May 30, 1518, Luther writes, "I learned - thanks to the work and talent of the most learned men who teach us Greek and Hebrew with such great devotion - that the [Latin] word *poenitentia* means *metanoia* in Greek; it is derived from *meta* and *noun*, that is, from 'afterward' and 'mind.' *Poenitentia* or *metanoia*, therefore, means coming to one's right mind and a comprehension of one's own evil after one has accepted the damage and recognized the error. . . . Such transition of the mind, that is, the most true *poenitentia*, is found very

frequently in Holy Scripture: the old Passover foreshadowed it, and Christ made it a reality; it was also long before that time prefigured in Abraham, when (according to the learned exegesis of Paul of Burgos) he began to be called 'he who passes over,' that is, a 'Hebrew,' evidently because he had come across into Mesopotamia."¹²

- Also consider the writings of the early church theologian Tertullian (c. 155 - c. 220 AD). In his book *Against Marcion*, written at the start of the third century (in about 208 AD), Tertullian says this about the true meaning of metanoia: "Now in Greek the word for repentance (*metanoia*) is formed, not from the confession of a sin, but from **a change of mind**, which in God we have shown to be regulated by the occurrence of varying circumstances."¹³ Tertullian affirms that the meaning of *metanoia* is "a change of mind" and what that change of mind is about, or what it is in reference to, can vary depending on the circumstances given in the context of the passage. Furthermore, Tertullian points out that in the Bible even God repents! Thus, it is obvious that the meaning of the word repentance does not inherently convey being sorry for sin, because of course God has no sin to be sorry for! The word repentance (*metanoia*) simply means a change of mind, and what that change of mind is about must be determined by the context.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ James H. Moulton, and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 404.

² Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 405, italics his. The publishers give the following copyright note: "The Fourth Edition of Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, published by T. and T. Clark in 1901, was used in preparation of this edition."

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 406.

⁶ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, commentary on Matthew 3:2, online edition: www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/robertsons-word-pictures/matthew/matthew-3.html. Similarly, consider the comments on Matthew 3:2 in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*. "**Ver. 2. legōn** ["saying"] introduces the burden of his preaching. –**metanoete, Repent**. That was John's great word. Jesus used it also when He began to preach, but His distinctive watchword was Believe. The two watchwords point to different conceptions of the kingdom. John's kingdom was an object of awful dread, Jesus' of glad welcome. The message of the one was legal, of the

other evangelic. Change of mind John deemed very necessary as a preparation for Messiah's advent." (Alexander Balmain Bruce, W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912], 5 Volumes, Vol. 1, p. 79, commentary on Matthew 3:2, bold and italics his.)

⁷ Anthony E. Bottoms, "REPENTANCE AS 'TURNING AROUND'," Antje du Bois-Pedain, and Anthony E. Bottoms, Editors, *Penal Censure* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2019), p. 126, bold added, italics his.

⁸ Julius R. Mantey, "Repentance and Conversion," *Christianity Today*, March 2, 1962, italics his.

⁹ Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 157, italics his.

¹⁰ George Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1922), p. 287, italics his.

¹¹ J. Oswald Jackson, [REPENTANCE: OR THE CHANGE OF MIND NECESSARY FOR SALVATION CONSIDERED](#) (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1845), pp. 22-23, 101-102. (Last accessed January, 2020)

¹² ["To John von Staupitz, Wittenberg, May 30, 1518," Martin Luther, Edited and](#)

[Translated by Gottfried G. Krodel, *Luther's Works* \(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963\), 55 Volumes, Vol. 48., pp. 66-67.](#) (Last accessed January, 2020)

Another English translation, which is in some ways clearer, can be viewed at the following link: ["Letter of John Staupitz Accompanying the 'Resolutions' to the XCV Theses" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1518, *Works of Martin Luther*, Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs, et al., Translators and Editors \(Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915\), Volume 1, pp. 39-43.](#) (Last accessed January, 2020)

¹³ ["CHAP. XXIV.--Instances of God's repentance, and notably in the case of the Ninevites, accounted for and ably vindicated by Tertullian." *Tertullian Against Marcion, ANTE-NICENE CHRISTIAN LIBRARY: TRANSLATIONS OF THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS DOWN TO A.D. 325.*](#), 24 Volumes, Vol. 7. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Translated by Peter Holmes (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868), p. 107, bold added. (Last accessed January, 2020)