
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis
LESSON CIX : FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT (5:3-14)

From Darkness to Light (5:3-14) — Six Commands

As mentioned in the first lesson on this passage, we will be looking at this by focusing upon the six continued-action commands (present tense imperatives) within this passage:

- v. 3 *'be named' — 'let it not even be named among you'*
- v. 6 *'be deceived' — 'let no one deceive you with vain words'*
- v. 7 *'become' — 'do not become partakers with them'*
- v. 8 *'walk' — 'walk as children of light'*
- v. 11 *'have fellowship, participate' — 'have no fellowship with darkness'*
- v. 11 *'reprove' — 'but rather reprove them'*

Verse 7 appears to be a transitional verse, serving both what comes before and gliding into what follows. Here is a look at this passage, highlighting Paul's continued-action commands (using Young's Literal Translation as a basis):

³ ***LET IT NOT EVEN BE NAMED AMONG YOU,*** *as becometh saints;*

whoredom, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,

⁴ *also filthiness, and foolish talking, or jesting, — the things not fit —
but rather thanksgiving;*

[Why?] ⁵ *for this ye know, that every whoremonger, or unclean, or covetous person,
who is an idolater, hath no inheritance in the reign of the Christ and God.*

⁶ ***LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU WITH VAIN WORDS,***

[Why?] *for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of the
disobedience,*

⁷ ***BECOME NOT, THEN, PARTAKERS WITH THEM,***

⁸ ***WALK YE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT,***

for ye were once darkness, and now light in the Lord;

[Parenthetical comment on the light] ⁹ *for the fruit of the light [Spirit] is in
all goodness, and righteousness, and truth,*

¹⁰ *proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord,*

¹¹ ***HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF THE DARKNESS
BUT RATHER EVEN REPROVE THEM, EXPOSE THEM,***

[Why?] ¹² *for the things in secret done by them it is a shame even to speak of,*

¹³ and all the things reprov'd by the light are manifested, for everything that is manifested is light; ¹⁴ wherefore he saith,

*'Arouse thyself, thou who art sleeping,
and arise out of the dead,
and the Christ shall shine upon thee.'*

THE SIXTH COMMAND (cont.)

v. 11b — but rather expose them. (NKJV) — μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε [mallon de kai elegchete] — Continuing on from last week's lesson where we gave an overview of the problems within these next couple verses, we will now look at the verses themselves.

but rather — μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ [mallon de kai] — **STRONG ADVERSATIVE** — Three different words are used here to emphasize the strong contrast: 'but' [δὲ, de] = an adversative conjunction; 'rather, instead' [μᾶλλον, mallon] = a comparative adverb, and 'and, even' [καὶ, kai] = very common conjunction, best understood here as 'even.' *Taken together, Paul is emphasizing a strong contrast, 'but rather even...'. "An emphatic [mallon de kai] introducing v. 11b indicates an important new stage in the discussion: not only are believers to avoid wrong conduct; they are to confront it when they see it in others; instead of participating in works of darkness they are to take positive steps against such works or against those who perpetrate them."* [Best, 492] "Yea, much more' – or, better, 'but rather even' – a formula which gives special intensity to the antithesis... *It was a duty to have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness; but it was a far higher obligation to reprimand them. There was to be not simply negative separation, but positive rebuke — not by the contrast of their own purity, but by formal and solemn reproof.* 1 Cor. xiv. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 2." [Eadie, 382; see also Hoehner, 678; Moule, 132]

expose them — ἐλέγχετε [elegchete] — **THE WORD DEFINED** — This word can have a wide variety of meanings as shown by the Greek lexicons. Here are the definitions from some lexicons: from **BDAG**:

(1) to scrutinize or examine carefully, *bring to light, expose, set forth* (Eph 5:11, 13; John 3:20); (2) to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing, *convict, convince someone of something, point something out to someone* (John 8:9, 46; 16:8; 1 Cor 14:24; Titus 1:9; James 2:9; Jude 15); (3) to express strong disapproval of someone's action, *reprove, correct* (Matt 18:15; Luke 3:19; 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15); (4) to penalize for wrongdoing, *punish, discipline* (Heb 12:5; Rev 3:19).

From **Friberg Greek Lexicon**:

“(1) In the NT, generally as showing someone that he has done something wrong and summoning him to repent: *bring to light, expose, convince, convict*; (2) in the sense of setting right: *reprove, correct*; in an intensified sense: *rebuke, discipline, punish*.”

From **Thayer Greek Lexicon of the NT**:

“(1) *to convict, refute, confute*, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted ... of crime, fault, or error; of sin; ... contextually, *by conviction to bring to light*,

to expose; ... used of the exposure and confutation of false teachers of Christianity; ... (2) to find fault with, correct; a. by word; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove; ... contextually, to call to account, show one his fault, demand an explanation; ... to chasten, punish.”

According to the **Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament** by George V. Wigram [originally published 1840; seventh printing by Hendrikson Publishers Marketing, 2012], **this word is used 17x** (Strong’s Concordance word # 1651, ἐλέγχω, elegchō) **and an intensified form of this word is used in one other place in the NT** (in Jude 15; Strong’s Concordance word # 1827, ἐξελέγχω, exelegchō, ‘to convict thoroughly’). The word is used twice in the immediate Ephesian verses:

‘And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose [ἐλέγχετε, elegchete] them.... But all things that are exposed [ἐλεγχόμενα, elegchomena] are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.’ (Eph 5:11, 13)

Here are the other usages in the NT:

‘Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault [ἐλεγξον, elegxon] between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.’ (Matt 18:15)

‘But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked [ἐλεγχόμενος, elegchomenos] by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done’ (Luke 3:19)

‘For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.’ [ἐλεγχθῇ, elegchthē] (John 3:20)

‘Then those who heard it, being convicted [ἐλεγχόμενοι, elegchomenoi] by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.’ (John 8:9)

‘Which of you convicts [ἐλέγχει, elegchei] Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?’ (John 8:46)

‘And when He has come, He will convict [ἐλέγξει, elegxei] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ (John 16:8)

‘and if all may prophecy, and any one may come in, an unbeliever or unlearned, he is convicted [ἐλέγχεται, elegchetai] by all, he is discerned [ἀνακρίνεται, anakrinetai, ‘to examine’] by all’ (1 Cor 14:24 YLT)

‘Those who are sinning rebuke [ἐλεγχε, elegche] in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.’ (1 Tim 5:20)

‘preach the word; be earnest in season, out of season, convict, [ἐλεγξον, elegxon] rebuke, [ἐπιτίμησον, epitimēson, ‘to rebuke, to warn’] exhort, in all long-suffering and teaching’ (2 Tim 4:2 YLT)

‘He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke [ἐλέγχειν, elegchein] those who contradict it.’ (Titus 1:9 ESV)

‘This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke [ἐλέγχε, elegche] them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith’ (Titus 1:13)

‘Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke [ἐλέγχε, elegche] with all authority. Let no one despise you.’ (Titus 2:15)

‘And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked [ἐλεγχόμενος, elegchomenos] by Him”’ (Heb 12:5)

‘but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted [ἐλεγχόμενοι, elegchomenoi] by the law as transgressors.’ (James 2:9)

‘to execute judgment on all, to convict [ἐξελέγξει, exelegxai] all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’ (Jude 15)

‘As many as I love, I rebuke [ἐλέγχω, elegchō] and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.’ (Rev 3:19)

Harold Hoehner notes this word in classical Greek meant ‘to disgrace, put to shame’ but its more prominent use is ‘to cross-examine, question, investigate, to convict, or to expose.’ Ernest Best summarizes the meaning of the word as follows, quoting Engberg-Pedersen: “[W]e can then modify his interpretation to ‘confronting people or their thoughts, words or actions with the aim of showing them to be, in some determinate sense, at fault.’ This understanding approximates to two of the meanings often given to the verb, ‘convict, convince’ and ‘reprove, rebuke;’ both of these involve confrontation and it is difficult to draw a precise line between them.” [Best, 493]

HOW DO THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS TRANSLATE THIS WORD? — Here is a summation of how the different Bible versions we are using translate this word:

¹¹ and have no fellowship with the vnfruitfull workes of dercknes: but rather rebuke them. (Tyndale’s NT, 1534)

¹¹ And haue no fellowship with ye vnfruitfull works of darknes, but euen reprove them rather. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (KJV, 1769)

¹¹ and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of the darkness and rather even convict, (YLT, 1898)

¹¹ and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; (RV, 1885)

¹¹ and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; (ASV, 1901)

And stop having fellowship with the unfruitful works of this darkness, but rather be rebuking them so as to bring out confession and conviction, (Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation, 1961)

¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. (RSV, 1952)

¹¹ *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.* (NKJV, 1982)

¹¹ *Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;* (NASV, 1995)

¹¹ *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.* (NIV, 2011)

¹¹ *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.* (ESV, 2016)

WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF ‘EXPOSE / REPROVE’? — As we will see in the discussion that follows, the translation of the word ‘rebuke, reprove, convict, expose’ depends upon the object of the verb. This is a potential problem even in our own language, as the following joke illustrates:

‘I saw a moose on the way to work this morning.’

‘How did you know the moose was on its way to work?!?’

Most of the commentaries I have studied agree the most natural object would be ‘*the unfruitful works of darkness*’ (v. 11) and not the persons themselves, ‘*things done by them*’ (v. 12). This is also recognized by many of the recent Bible versions which translates this word as ‘*bringing to light, exposing*’ the deeds of darkness. If the object of this word were the people themselves then ‘*rebuke, reprove, convict*’ may be a more appropriate translation. ***“When wrong is exposed, a conviction must follow that should result in reproof or rebuke. This in turn should lead to discipline. Hence, exposing includes both convicting and rebuking. In the present context it is best translated as ‘expose’ because the object of the imperative is not persons but works. This coheres with the whole passage. In verse 9 Paul speaks of actions or works of goodness, righteousness, and truth (fruit of light) and in verse 10 believers are enjoined to discover actions or works that please the Lord. Both of these verses speak about good actions or works that are associated with light. Furthermore, in verse 13 Paul speaks of ‘everything’ (ta panta) and not ‘everyone’ is to be exposed by light. Now in verse 11 Paul discusses the opposite kinds of actions or works, unfruitful works of darkness which must be exposed.”*** [Hoehner, 679; see also O’Brien, 371; Lincoln, 329] “The object of [elegchete] is undefined; v. 11a would suggest a reference to the works of darkness, v. 12 to those who perform them. [elegchein] has a wide range of meaning as the lexica show. One possible meaning, the disciplining or punishing of those whose works belong to darkness, can hardly be intended since nothing in the context implies this; it is an interpretation automatically excluded if the works are the object of the verb. Many commentators and translations choose the meaning ‘expose, reveal’; in this case the object of the verb would be the works of darkness; believers in some way, by word or example, expose to those who perform works of darkness the true nature of their actions as works of darkness.” [Best, 492f]

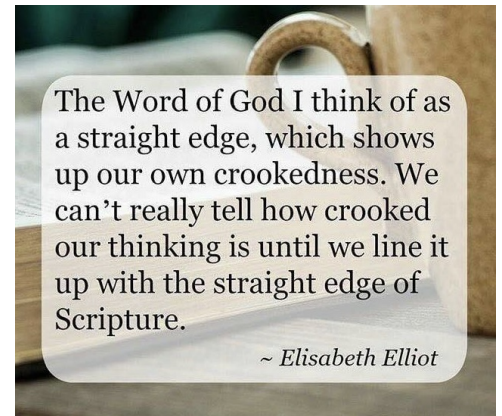
THE COMMAND: WE ARE TO ‘EXPOSE’ THE ACTIONS OF OUR ERRING BROTHER OR SISTER — ***“Rather than participating in such futile activity [referring to the unfruitful works of darkness], the believer’s existence as light in the Lord leads him or her to ἐλέγχειν (elenchein) the unfruitful works of darkness. This term can mean simply to ‘uncover’ something, such as the source of the Jordan River, but it was most commonly used to refer to the exposure of something evil, deceptive, ugly, or illegal that the perpetrator wanted to remain hidden, but that either through his or her own mistake or through the evidence provided by another was nevertheless revealed. If darkness serves as a cloak for the deception, then light can expose it. If fabricated evidence or specious argumentation hides the truth, these can be exposed***

by good counter-evidence or a solidly grounded argument.... *The term can also take on positive connotations, however, by referring to the action of pointing out error in order to correct it and put someone on the right path. The LXX and the NT use the term this way to refer to God's fatherly discipline (2 Sam. 7:14; Prov. 3:11-12; Wis. 12:2; Sir. 18:13; Heb. 12:5-6; Rev. 3:19), to describe the helpful correction that the wise person could offer to others (Prov. 9:7-8), to depict the correction that one believer could offer others on the basis of authoritative tradition (2 Tim. 4:2 [cf. 3:16]; Titus 1:9; 2:15; cf. Titus 1:13), and to express the reconciling correction that those who were wronged could provide for those who wronged them (Lev. 19:17; Sir. 19:13-17; Matt. 18:5). Paul can use the term this way of an unbeliever or inquirer who might enter an assembly of believers at worship and, because of the prophecies uttered there, is 'exposed [ἐλέγχεται, elenchetai] by all, called to account by all,' has the 'hidden things of his [or her] heart revealed,' and is led to worship God (1 Cor 14:24-25). Here exposure has the positive result of conversion.'*" [Thielman, 343] *"In the next clause ... Paul advises a particular course of action to follow when one encounters a fellow believer participating in evil behavior. The actions of the erring brother or sister should be 'exposed' (elegchete). The purpose of bringing the inappropriate conduct to light is not punitive but restorative, as the following lines will show. The verb is probably best translated as 'expose' here since this is the function of light when it penetrates darkness (see also John 3:19-20), but the term was also commonly used with the sense of 'rebuke' and 'convict.' In this context, the purpose of the exposure is to bring conviction and correction.... Paul describes the process in more detail to the Galatians where he advises gentleness: 'Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted' (Gal 6:1). This practice was taken up by the second-century church in dealing with sinful members of the community as illustrated in the Didache: 'Furthermore, correct one another (ἐλέγχετε ἀλλήλους, elegchete allēlous), not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel' (Didache 15:3)."* [Arnold, 331f; note the Didache (= 'teaching'), AKA 'The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations' possibly dates back to the first century but certainly no later than the second century; a composite work of several anonymous authors. It is known as the earliest extant written catechism.] *"[F]or believers to convince other believers of their wrongdoing could be seen as a Christian duty, and this would emphasise the sense 'rebuke, reprove'. Reproval would not be tactful if unbelievers were its recipients; nothing would be more likely to turn them against Christianity!* That church members should rebuke, correct or reprove other members is seen as a Christian duty in a number of passages (1 Tim 5:20; Jas 5:19f; in Tit 1.9, 13 the references relate to the correction of belief rather than behaviour); it is in particular a duty laid on pastors (2 Tim 4.2; Tit 2.15); in Mt 18.15-17 where a more formal procedure for correction is set out it is as in Eph 5.11 a duty laid on all believers. The correction of the faults of one member by others within a closely knit community is a normal communal activity as evidence from Qumran shows (1QS 5.23-6.1; 9.17; CD 7.2f; 9.6-8; 20.4; cf Testament of Gad 6.3, 6; Testament of Joseph 6.6); Didache 15.3 says such rebuking should not be done angrily but in peace. The idea of reproof within the community runs back into the OT (Lev 19.17; Prov 9.7f; 10.10; Eccles 19.13ff)." [Best, 493f]

IS THIS 'EXPOSE / REBUKE' VERBAL OR NON-VERBAL? — *"We have touched throughout on the manner in which fellow believers should be rebuked and reprovved. Since sins are not to be named (5.3), it has been argued that any correction must be nonverbal; 5.3 however cannot be taken literally, and the same applies to 5.12. [Paul] continually rebukes and reprovves his readers verbally.... In Mt 18.15-17; 2 Tim 4.2; Tit 2.15 the rebukes are verbal;*

generally in the NT [elegchein] refers to speech rather than action. Yet, of course, there is a place also for non-verbal rebuke in so far as good behaviour is itself a criticism of sin (Mt 5.16; Phil 2.15; 1 Th 4.12; 1 Pet 2.12)." [Best, 491]

BALANCE REQUIRED — The NT describes believers as *'brethren, disciples, bond-servants of Christ'* but no where do we find ourselves called *'the Lord's policemen!'* Our confronting other believers is only one aspect of our Christian walk. We are not to shy away from that responsibility when the occasion arises but we would be extremely unbalanced if that was the entire focus of our lives.



PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES ON 'EXPOSING / REBUKING' THE BRETHREN — Forgive the following long quotes but I believe them helpful admonitions as we consider helping our erring brethren. **Clinton Arnold:**

"Paul frequently encourages believers to *'reprove'* (elegcho; e.g., 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15) or to admonish (noutheteo; Acts 20:31; Rom 15:14; Col 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thess 5:12, 14; 2 Thess 3:15) those believers who are sinning. This is something Paul himself practiced with his churches that serves as an instructive example. He told the Corinthians, *'I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children'* (1 Cor 4:14). He further models this principle to the Corinthians when he exposes a situation of sexual immorality in which a Christian man at Corinth was having sexual relations with his stepmother (5:1-13).

"This kind of public exposure of sin should not come, however, until a process of private exposure and admonishment has taken place. Thus, Paul tells Timothy, *'As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear'* (1 Tim 5:20 ESV). No doubt, Paul is following the teaching of Jesus in taking this approach: *'If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses"'* (Matt 18:15-16).

"Popular evangelical culture is often rather *'hands off'* these days when it comes to admonishing fellow believers regarding sinful practices. This is possibly less so when it comes to sexual sin, but it is certainly the case when it comes to matters such as confronting an avaricious lifestyle or speaking to fellow believers who have a tendency to tell off-color jokes or inappropriate stories. There are a variety of reasons for this. For some, there may be a hesitancy because they are aware of sinful patterns in their own life that need to be changed before they admonish a brother or a sister. For them, the teaching of Jesus about removing first the plank in their own eye applies (Matt 7:5; Luke 6:42).

"Others may fear some form of reprisal or push back from the person they confront. This may be a legitimate fear, especially if the person is immature in the faith. The book of Proverbs speaks of reprisals from *'the wicked'* if one confronts them: *'Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse'* (Prov 9:7; see also 9:8; 15:12). Nevertheless, Proverbs commends rebuke as wisdom because of the positive impact it will have on the person who is willing to hear it: *'He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue'* (Prov 28:23).

“Still other Christians may never take the risk to speak to someone about their sin because they are convinced that it is a form of ‘*judging*,’ and Jesus warns against that (Matt 7:1; Luke 6:37). Yet the kind of judgment Jesus speaks of here relates more to an absolute judgment of their fate before God; otherwise, Jesus’ instructions to reprove one’s sinning brother (Matt 18:15-16) would be inconsistent and nonsensical when compared to his earlier teaching.

“The point here is that God has placed believers into a community, and he wants them to feel a certain level of responsibility toward their fellow brothers and sisters. Every believer needs to come to an inner conviction that he or she will talk to an erring friend if they fall into a pattern of sinful behavior. Of course, this needs to be done with a great deal of wisdom and the right kind of sensitivity. This is precisely how Paul advises the Galatians when he says, ‘*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted*’ (Gal 6:1).

“The good news for the erring believer is that if he or she responds to the rebuke, they will receive grace and strength from the Lord. The third line of the hymnic citation promises, ‘*and Christ will shine upon you!*’ (5:14).” [Arnold, 338ff]

John MacArthur:

“To ignore evil is to encourage it; to keep quiet about it is to help promote it. The verb here translated expose (from *elegcho*) can also carry the idea of reproof, correction, punishment, or discipline. We are to confront sin with intolerance.

“Sometimes such exposure and reproof will be direct and at other times indirect, but it should always be immediate in the face of anything that is sinful. When we are living in obedience to God, that fact in itself will be a testimony against wrong. When those around us see us helping rather than exploiting, hear us talking with purity instead of profanity, and observe us speaking truthfully rather than deceit fully, our example will itself be a rebuke of selfishness, unwholesome talk, and falsehood. Simply refusing to participate in a dishonest business or social practice will sometimes be such a strong rebuke that it costs us our job or a friendship. Dishonesty is terribly uncomfortable in the presence of honesty, even when there is no verbal or other direct opposition.

“Often, of course, open rebuke is necessary. Silent testimony will only go so far. Failure to speak out against and to practically oppose evil things is a failure to obey God. Believers are to expose them in whatever legitimate, biblical ways are necessary. Love that does not openly expose and oppose sin is not biblical love. Love not only ‘*does not act unbecomingly*’ itself but it ‘*does not rejoice in unrighteousness*’ wherever it might be found (1 Cor. 13:5-6). Our Lord said, ‘*If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private If he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church*’ (Matt.18:15-17). This is the responsibility of every Christian (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1, 20 ; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15).

“Unfortunately, many Christians are so barely able to keep their own spiritual and moral houses in order that they do not have the discernment, inclination, or power to confront evil in the church or in society at large. We should be so mature in biblical truth, and in obedience, holiness, and love that part of the natural course of our life is to expose, rebuke, and offer the remedy for every kind of evil.

“Many Christians do not expose and rebuke evil because they do not take it seriously. They laugh and joke about things that are unadulterated wickedness, that are immoral and ungodly in the

extreme. They recognize the sinfulness of those things and would likely never participate in them; but they enjoy them vicariously from a distance. In so doing, they not only fail be an influence against the evil but are instead influenced by it – contaminated by it to the full extent that they think and talk about it without exposing and rebuking it.” [MacArthur, 212]