

CLC THESES AND ANTITHESES ON THE ROLE OF ADMONITION 2315  
IN THE TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP WITH CHURCH BODIES

Romans 16:17-18 has always been considered a *sedes doctrinae* among us. We affirm that this passage is a word of God which teaches clearly the separation principle. We herewith set forth that which we affirm and believe, as well as that which we reject, with regard to the role of admonition in the termination of fellowship with church bodies.

- I. We regard fraternal (in-fellowship) admonition as a continuing function of Christian love among brethren in the exercise of their fellowship relations, also and particularly when there is concern that brethren may have strayed into error. (Compare Ezekiel 33:1-9; Romans 15:1-14; Ephesians 4:1-6; Colossians 3:12-17; 2 Timothy 4:2.) Such admonition directed to a sister church body and the response thereto play a proper role in ascertaining whether that synod has the status of weak brethren or whether it is causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine of God's Word.

We repudiate any application of Romans 16:17-18 to those brethren who have misspoken or inadvertently erred, or to those who have the status of weak brethren. In the case of all such, Christian love teaches us rather to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2)

- II. The *skopein* ("keep on watching out for") of Romans 16:17 is an activity whereby believers in Christ are to be constantly alert for those who are causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine of God's Word.

We do not believe that *skopein* in the context of Romans 16:17 specifically and directly enjoins admonition. This does not deny that admonition, as enjoined in other passages of Scripture, will normally take place concurrently with the watchfulness that is implicit in the *skopein*.

- III. When it has been ascertained that a church body is causing (*tous poiountas*) divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine of Holy Scripture, the directive to avoid is as binding as any word addressed to us by our Savior God in Holy Scripture. The apostle's peremptory *ekkline* ("avoid") is the voice of the Good Shepherd Himself, as He lovingly protects His sheep and lambs from the deception of error and as He graciously gives warning to the false teacher. Continuing in fellowship for any reason with those who are causing divisions and offenses exposes Christians to the dangerous leaven of error, which is contrary to the Lord's saving intent. Romans 16:17-18.

- A. We reject any interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 which, in the name of Christian love, would make the avoiding of causers of divisions and offenses contingent upon the subjective judgment that admonition is of no further avail and that an impasse has thereby been reached.
- B. We also reject any interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 which in effect states that when a person or church body with whom we are in fellowship causes divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, we mark them immediately, then admonish, and if this proves fruitless, avoid them.

