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AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF ROMANS 16:17-20  
IN LIGHT OF ITS USE IN THE MISSOURI  
SYNOD DURING THE LAST THIRTY YEARS FOR  
THE QUESTION OF FELLOWSHIP

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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by

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May 1970

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is designed to investigate the use to which Rom. 16:17-20 has been put in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, particularly within the last thirty years. At the same time this dissertation offers an objective and independent interpretation of that pericope. The purpose of the study is not merely to add one more interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. Instead, it is an attempt to examine the passage in light of its use in the Missouri Synod in the past. Simply stated our intent has been to provide a setting for the proper use of Rom. 16:17-20 in contemporary American discussions on church fellowship in the Lutheran Church.

By way of introduction, a brief history of the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 provides the necessary background for our interest in the interpretation of the passage. At the outset it may be said that these verses have greatly influenced the Missouri Synod's theology of fellowship as applied to her relationship with other Lutheran bodies. Throughout the history of this church body Rom. 16:17-20 has raised important theological and practical concerns in the matter of church fellowship. The passage has been interpreted and applied in several different ways.

Changes that have occurred in the Missouri Synod's position on prayer and church fellowship have been summarized by

Dr. Arthur C. Repp.<sup>1</sup> He notes that the Synod's present theology of fellowship is the product of three general periods of change in which this church body has, in effect, moved in a complete circle. The present position is essentially that which the Synod held at its founding in 1847. Since Rom. 16:17-20 has been the locus classicus for the Missouri Synod's position on unionism and church fellowship, it is not surprising to note a similar development in the interpretation and use of the passage. While other portions of Scripture also play ~~in~~ a role in the development of Missouri's stance, there appears to be a close correlation between changes in the interpretation and application of Rom. 16:17-20 and the changes that have occurred in the Missouri Synod's theology of church fellowship. If there are three general periods of development of the Missouri Synod's theology of fellowship, one can also discern three distinct, if somewhat overlapping, eras in the history of the interpretation and use of Rom. 16:17-20.

The first period in the history of the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 begins just prior to the founding of the Missouri Synod, in 1847, and extends roughly to the end of the nineteenth century. During these decades the passage was interpreted as a warning against false teachers. It was then applied against schismatics, sects, and various heretics. When the Missouri Synod was founded in 1847,

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur C. Repp, "Changes in the Missouri Synod," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVIII (July-August 1967), 468-478.

a reference to Rom. 16:17 was included in its constitution. Article I,

"Grunde fuer die Bildung eines Synodal-Verbandes," states:

#2. Erhaltung und Foerderung der Einheit des reinen Bekenntnisses (Ephes. 4, 3-6. I Cor. 1, 10.) und gemeinsame Abwehr des separatistischen und sektirerischen Unwesens.\*) (Rom. 16,17.)<sup>2</sup>

An explanatory footnote, which has at times been overlooked, defines separatism and sectarianism as follows:

Separatisten (Schismatiker) oder sich Absondernde sind solche, die zwar zuerst sich nicht von der Lehre, sondern nur von der aeussern Gemeinschaft der Kirche trennen, weil dieser auch Heuchler beigemischt sind; gleich als vermoechte die Kirche diese Maulchristen, zumal wo ihr Heuchelglaube nicht in offenbaren Suenden ausbricht, von sich abzusondern. Vielmehr hat sie sich dann nach Matth. 13, 29.30 und nach dem Verfahren des Herrn mit dem Judas zu richten. Denn nur offenkündige und halsstarrige Suender hat sie endlich, nachdem alle Grade der Bestrafung nach Matth. 18,15-17. sich als fruchtlos erwiesen, von sich auszustoszen.

Sektirer dagegen oder Ketzler (Haeretiker) sind solche, die sich von der reinen Lehre trennen und in diesem oder jenem Artikel schriftwidrige, also falsche Lehre aufbringen, verbreiten oder doch derselben anhaengen und halsstarrig vertheidigen. Diese soll die Kirche, nachdem sie einmal und abermal vergebens ermahnt sind, meiden und von sich thun, Tit. 3, 10. Roem. 16, 17. ja nach Gal. 1, 8.9. sie verfluchen, nicht wiederum zur Busze kommen, sondern als Traeger der seelmoerderischen Irrlehre.-- Haeufig geschieht es uebrigens, dass aus Separatisten endlich Sektirer werden.<sup>3</sup>

In light of later development, it is significant that Dr. C. F. W. Walther, who dominated Synodical thinking in its early years, and other Missouri Synod writers in the Synod's early days, never applied Rom. 16:17 against other Lutherans. It would seem such

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<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten (St. Louis: Weber & Olshause, 1846), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

action would be in keeping with the spirit of the constitution and the footnote cited above.

The beginnings of a second phase of the use of Rom. 16:17-20 can be traced to a controversy regarding the doctrine of election which erupted in the Synodical Conference soon after it was founded in 1872. By 1882 the predestinarian issue was being hotly debated in Lutheran circles throughout the United States. In the year 1882 the Missouri Synod brought an official protest before the Synodical Conference against the views of Dr. F. A. Schmidt of the Ohio Synod on the subject of predestination. On the basis of Rom. 16:17, the Missouri Synod demanded that Dr. Schmidt be expelled from the Synodical Conference.<sup>4</sup> This began a course of action in which the Missouri Synod began to sever ties with a number of Lutheran bodies. By the turn of the century the election controversy had subsided, and the Missouri Synod's new and narrower views on church fellowship and unionism had begun to crystalize. Now Rom. 16:17-20 was being applied for the first time against fellow Lutherans.

One of the most significant evidences of the change was an article by Dr. F. Bente in Lehre und Wehre titled, "Warum koennen wir keine gemeinsamen Gebetsgottesdienste mit Ohioern und Iowern veranstalten und abhalten?" In disavowing fraternal fellowship with the Ohio Synod, Iowa Synod, General Council, and General Synod, Bente

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<sup>4</sup>Verhandlungen der neunten Versammlung der evangelisch-lutherischen Synodal-Konferenz von Nord Amerika zu Chicago, Illinois, 1882. St. Louis: Luthischer Concordia Verlag, 1882, p. 10.

based a large part of his argument on Rom. 16:17-20.<sup>5</sup> According to Bente's interpretation of Rom. 16:17, complete unity in doctrine and practice is necessary before any fellowship with another church can be practiced. Passages such as Rom. 16:17, which earlier had been applied against schismatics and those who rejected the Lutheran Confessions, now were applied against other Lutherans. Bente's position, as stated in his essay, is important, because it was to serve as a major source and foundation for the Missouri Synod's policy of church fellowship with other Lutherans for almost half a century. One example of the change Bente helped create can be found in the Brief Statement, which was officially adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1932 and reaffirmed numerous times thereafter. Paragraph 28 of the Brief Statement reads:

On Church Fellowship.--Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church . . . . all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7, 15, to have church fellowship with only orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them. (Romans 16, 17).<sup>6</sup>

For all practical purposes a heterodox church body was defined as any group which was not in fellowship with the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference. Thus in its second period of use the

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<sup>5</sup>F. Bente, "Warum koennen wir keine gemeinsamen Gebetsgottesdienste mit Ohioern und Iowern veranstalten und abhalten?", Lehre und Wehre, LI (March 1905), 101-113.

<sup>6</sup>A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), paragraph 28.



interpretation of Rom. 16:17 remained essentially the same as in the first--a warning against false teachers. However, the passage was rigorously and specifically applied to the question of fellowship with other Lutherans.

Beginnings of a third phase in the interpretation and use of Rom. 16:17-20 can be traced to the late 1920's and early 1930's. Both a new interpretation and application of the passage began to develop. This triggered a storm of controversy during the Missouri Synod's negotiations with the American Lutheran Church in the 1940's and early 1950's. The new interpretation finally became the Missouri Synod's generally accepted position on church fellowship in the 1960's. Simply stated Rom. 16:17-20 came to be interpreted as a warning against people who cause divisions in the church, and not, as had been previously held, a warning specifically against teachers of false doctrine. For all practical purposes the passage began to be used in a way similar to its application in the early years of the Missouri Synod.

One of the first to question the Missouri Synod's theology of church fellowship and use of Rom. 16:17-20 during the 1920's was Dr. Adolph Brux, then a Missouri Synod missionary to India. His views of church and prayer fellowship and his interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 are best stated in his monograph, Christian Prayer-Fellowship and Unionism.<sup>7</sup> While this monograph is treated in greater detail in

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<sup>7</sup>Adolph A. Brux, Christian Prayer-Fellowship and Unionism (N. p., 1935).

Chapter VI, it may be said here that Brux contended that Rom. 16:17-20 does not exclude all fellowship with other Christians who do not completely agree with the Missouri Synod in doctrine and practice.

Dr. Brux was recalled from India in 1931 because of his views on church and prayer fellowship. Eventually he left the Missouri Synod. However, his views were heard and heeded in later years.

The Missouri Synod's negotiations with the American Lutheran Church in the late 1930's and early 1940's to establish altar and pulpit fellowship called for a reassessment of the Missouri Synod's position on church fellowship and a restudy of Rom. 16:17. Various studies of Rom. 16:17-20 in those years seem to center on the question, "How is Rom. 16:17-20 to be applied today?"

One of the most important and influential answers to that question was given by a group of forty-four pastors and professors of the Missouri Synod when they met on September 6 and 7, 1945 in Chicago. The result of that meeting was a document called A Statement.<sup>8</sup> A short time later, A Statement was published together with explanatory essays in a monograph called Speaking the Truth in Love.<sup>9</sup>

"Thesis V" of A Statement states:

We affirm our conviction that sound exegetical procedure is the basis for sound Lutheran theology.

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<sup>8</sup>"A Statement," in Speaking the Truth in Love, Essays Related to A Statement (Chicago: The Willow Press, [1946]), pp. 7-9.

<sup>9</sup>Speaking the Truth in Love, Essays Related to A Statement, (Chicago: The Willow Press, [1946]).

We therefore deplore the fact that Romans 16:17, 18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. It is our conviction, based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America.<sup>10</sup>

The accompanying essay, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI, concludes that Rom. 16:17, 18 is a warning against division makers, and not specifically against false teachers, and that, therefore, it does not necessarily apply to every Christian who differs with the Missouri Synod in points of doctrine.

The publication of A Statement created widespread interest in Rom. 16:17-20. The ensuing discussion, controversy, and confusion regarding the proper meaning of Rom. 16:17 extended throughout the Missouri Synod. The passage became the subject of numerous monographs, of which one by Dr. E. W. A. Koehler<sup>11</sup> and one by Robert G. Hoerber<sup>12</sup> are more fully discussed in Chapter VI. The passage became the subject of discussion and debate by individuals, pastoral conferences, district conventions, by the officials of the Missouri Synod, and by the faculties of the Synod's two theological seminaries.

By the summer of 1947 Rom. 16:17-20 had received such Synod-wide attention that the passage became the subject of discussion and debate at the Centennial Convention of the Missouri Synod. Not only was the interpretation of a Scripture passage being called into question,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>E. W. A. Koehler, Romans 16:17-20 (N. p., 1946).

<sup>12</sup>Robert G. Hoerber, A Grammatical Study of Romans 16:17 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, n.d.).

but the Missouri Synod's position on church fellowship was hanging in the balance. The Synod made no definite decision in the matter. Instead the convention directed the president of the Synod to submit material for the Scriptural study of the question at issue to its pastors and congregations.<sup>13</sup> In response to the directive of the Synodical convention, President J. W. Behnken in a letter dated May 11, 1950 submitted an exegesis of Rom. 16:17-20 to the clergy and congregations of the Missouri Synod for study.<sup>14</sup> The essay, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI, reaffirmed the so-called traditional interpretation of Rom. 16:17. However, it did caution against applying the passage indiscriminately against other Lutherans.

By the time the Missouri Synod met in convention during 1950 the controversy concerning Rom. 16:17-20 had greatly subsided, even if the issues involved had not been satisfactorily resolved. The 1950 convention adopted this resolution concerning Rom. 16:17:

We affirm, as Scripturally correct, the use of Rom. 16:17 in the Constitution of Synod, the synodical Catechism, and the Brief Statement.<sup>15</sup>

The matter of church fellowship and Rom. 16:17-20 was revived at the Missouri Synod's convention in 1956, when the two theological seminaries were asked to prepare an extensive study on the theology

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<sup>13</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings (1947), pp. 520-521.

<sup>14</sup>[Martin F. Franzmann], Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff. (N. p., 1950).

<sup>15</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings (1950), p. 656.

of fellowship.<sup>16</sup> The result of their study, a document called "Theology of Fellowship," was completed in 1960 and was submitted to the Missouri Synod Convention in 1962. The study was then revised. It was received by the 1965 convention of the Missouri Synod as a document for study and guidance, and it was recommended that the study be adopted at the 1967 convention.<sup>17</sup> The "Theology of Fellowship" was subsequently adopted by the 1967 convention, "as a synodical document for reference and guidance."<sup>18</sup>

The "Theology of Fellowship" is important not only because it represents a change in the Missouri Synod's theology of church fellowship, but also because of its interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. In Part Three of the "Theology of Fellowship," in a section titled "An Examination of the Passages which Command Separation," the following statement is made concerning Rom. 16:17,18:

This passage, perhaps more than any other has figured prominently in past discussions of what has come to be called unionism. A number of widely divergent interpretations of the passage have been proposed.

A careful examination of this passage in its context reveals that it occurs in a chapter aimed by the apostle at strengthening the fellowship not only in the congregation at Rome, but between the Roman church and other Christian churches as well . . . . .

Paul does not name these disturbers of the peace and fellowship of the church, and it is of little use for Christians today to try to say with certainty who they were. The following facts, however, are clear from his words:

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<sup>16</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings (1956), p. 550.

<sup>17</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings (1965), p. 98.

<sup>18</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings (1967), p. 91.

1. Christians must be on their guard against those who seek to disrupt their fellowship in Christ;
2. The men whom Paul here commands his readers to mark and avoid are not the victims of past schisms and divisions. Rather, they cause (Greek: tous...poiountas; RSV: those who create dissensions, etc.) divisions and offenses. Paul tries to cement the church together in love and fellowship in Christ; these men try to divide it.
3. They make these divisions and offenses "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." This doctrine is the Gospel, which all Christians have learned, and which alone brings the Christian church into being and preserves it.
4. Because these trouble-makers are not erring Christians, who need to be taught, but people who attack the church's very foundation, namely, the Gospel, the apostle commands the Christians in Rome to avoid them, and judges: "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.

A careful study of Rom. 16:17,18 underscores the importance of observing the distinction between erring Christians, who must be instructed, and heretics, who attack the foundation of the church, as this distinction was set forth in THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, from writings of St. Augustine, of Luther, and from the Preface to The Book of Concord.<sup>19</sup>

This statement essentially represents the Missouri Synod's present interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. It concludes the third phase of the interpretation and use of the passage by that church body. In summary, it may be said that, while the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 has changed, the application and use made of Rom. 16:17-20 is basically the same today as when the Missouri Synod was founded in 1847.

The writer has approached his present task with these historical and theological data in mind. The purpose of this study, then, is to examine Rom. 16:17-20 in light of its use in the Missouri Synod, and to

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<sup>19</sup>Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Convention Workbook (1967), pp. 387-388.

provide a basis for the study and use of the passage in the contemporary Lutheran Church.

The major portion of the present study is the writer's own interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. Chapter II deals with the main problems confronted in establishing the text and in determining the authenticity of Romans 16. Chapter III is a detailed exegesis of Rom. 16:17-20 arranged in a series of short studies. Special attention has been given to word studies and grammatical problems. Chapter IV is an attempt to identify the people described by Paul in Rom. 16:17-20 on the basis of the text and the material contained in Chapter III. Although some use is made of the context throughout the study, Chapter V is an attempt to place Rom. 16:17-20 directly into its setting in Romans and in the other Pauline literature. Chapter VI contains a summary and a critique of five significant interpretations of Rom. 16:17-20. Most have been written within the last thirty years by members of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Chapter VII is a summary of an conclusions drawn from the findings of this study.

The chief source for this study is the Greek text of Rom. 16:17-20 as compiled by Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland.<sup>20</sup> Other generally accepted exegetical tools and commentaries have also been consulted. Attention has also been given to literature pertaining to Rom. 16:17-20 written by Missouri Synod Lutheran theologians. English Scripture quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Novum Testamentum Graecae, edited by Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland (24th edition; Stuttgart: Privileg. Wuertt. Bibleanstalt, 1960).

<sup>21</sup>The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952).

## CHAPTER II

### ESTABLISHING THE TEXT

#### Authenticity and Integrity of Romans 16

In addition to the normal task of establishing the correct text from the various textual variants, Rom. 16:17-20 presents the interpreter with the task of determining the authenticity and integrity of chapter 16. Since some of the problems involved have an important bearing on the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20, these arguments are here summarized insofar as they directly relate to our interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20.<sup>1</sup>

While the authenticity of Romans 16 has been disputed in the past, many scholars today are agreed that chapter 16 was written by Paul.<sup>2</sup> Parallels to Paul's language, style, thought patterns, and theology in chapter 16 may be found elsewhere, particularly at the conclusion of

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<sup>1</sup>For a more complete discussion of the authenticity and integrity of Romans 16, the reader is referred to such standard works as William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary: (5th edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960) pp. lxxxv-xcviii. Theodor Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1909), I, 352-439. Thomas W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans and Others," in Studies in the Gospels and Epistles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), pp. 225-242. Rudolf Schumacher, Die beiden letzten Kapitel des Roemerbriefes. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Geschichte und Erklarung, in Neutestamentlichen Abhandlungen, edited by Max Meinertz (Muenster i. W.: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1929), Band XIV, Heft 4, 332-347. John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1965), II, 262-268. Boyce W. Blackwelder, Toward Understanding Romans, An Introduction and Exegetical Translation (Anderson, Ind.; Warner Press, 1962), pp. 45-62.

<sup>2</sup>Blackwelder, pp. 48-49.



several other epistles (1 Cor. 16:19-21; Gal. 6:11-18; Col. 4:7-18; 2 Thess. 3:14-17).

On the other hand the problem of the integrity of Romans 16 has been and continues to be the subject of lively debate. The discussion of integrity on the basis of external evidence centers in the conflicting evidence given by the available texts and by several early witnesses to the sacred text. The main problems involved are the omission in some texts of *ἐν Ρώμῃ* at Rom. 1:7 and 15, the omission of chapters 15 and 16, and the variations in existing manuscripts of the position of the final doxology (Rom. 16:25-27). In an attempt to explain these and related phenomena, some scholars have suggested that chapter 16 originally was a separate letter, or constituted part of a letter sent to another church.<sup>3</sup> Other are led to conclude that chapter 16 is part of the original letter to Rome.<sup>4</sup> While neither position solves all the problems involved, the external evidence seems to be in favor of taking chapter 16 as part of the original letter to Rome. The tradition of the church supports this view, and the evidence from extant texts which omit chapter 16 is slim. The fact that Romans 16 has never been attached to another letter puts the burden of proof on those who would dispute the integrity of chapter 16.

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<sup>3</sup>Manson, pp. 225-226. W. Schmithals, "Die Irrlehrer von Rom. 16, 17-20," in Studia Theologica, XIII, (1959), 51-69.

<sup>4</sup>Sanday and Headlam, pp. lxxxv-xcviii. Zahn, I, 352-364. Murray, II, 268. F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 266-267.

A survey of the internal evidence further substantiates the view that chapter 16 is part of Romans. Most of the arguments employed against integrity deal with discernible differences between Rom. 16:17-20 and the remainder of the epistle. It has been argued, for example, that Paul's sudden and personal warning is in disharmony with the calm and restrained tone of the rest of the epistle.<sup>5</sup> However, the difference in style does not seem so great when one recalls other personal remarks the apostle makes in chapter 1. The tone of the warning in chapter 16 is no more harsh than many of the imperatives found in chapters 12 to 15. Further it is not unusual for Paul to end his letters in such a way. When bringing other epistles to a close, Paul takes pen in hand, and sometimes with strong words he adds final exhortations and greetings (1 Cor. 16:19-24; 2 Cor. 13:11-14; 2 Thess. 3:14-17; Col. 4:7-18). Such closing remarks do not always fit the language and style of the body of the epistle. Paul may be following a similar procedure in Romans 16.

Chapter 16 has also been suspect as part of Romans because the ideas expressed in verses 17 to 20 are allegedly foreign to the body of the epistle. Implicit in this objection is the view that the passage is a warning against false teachers. However, when the passage is understood as a warning against those who are causing divisions in the congregation, this objection disappears.<sup>6</sup>

A third argument sometimes used against the integrity of Romans 16 involves Paul's relationship to the church at Rome, specifically his

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<sup>5</sup>John Knox, "The Epistle to the Romans," in The Interpreter's Bible (Knoxville: Abingdon Press, 1954), IX, 661.

<sup>6</sup>Infra, Chapter V.

knowledge of the situation prevailing there at the time of writing.

Thomas W. Manson, who argues for the Ephesian destination of chapter 16, states:

The exhortations in vxi. 17-20 read very oddly if they are taken to be addressed to a church to which Paul is a stranger: they are very natural things to say to a community which he had founded and in which he had worked for several years.<sup>7</sup>

This objection likewise disappears when verses 17 to 20 are correctly understood and related to the rest of the epistle. If these verses contain a warning against division makers, one may conjecture that Paul knew of the situation, and chose this way to deal with it. If the warning is applied to the men described in chapter 14 and 15, there is no reason to seek elsewhere for a similar situation, such as that prevailing in Ephesus at the time.<sup>8</sup>

Having reviewed some of the problems involved in integrating Romans 16 with the body of the epistle, insofar as these problems have a direct bearing on the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20, there remains the task of fitting Rom. 16:17-20 into the framework of chapter 16. Not only is the warning against schismatics sudden and unexpected, but it appears to interrupt the list of greetings to the Christians at Rome. If chapters 1 to 15 are so carefully organized, why shouldn't chapter 16 follow the same pattern? In answering such objections it may be said that chapter 16 is more an integrated whole than may appear at first. If one understands Rom. 16:17-20 as a warning against people bent on destroying the unity

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<sup>7</sup>Manson, p. 237.

<sup>8</sup>Infra, chapter IV.

of the congregation it fits well with the rest of the chapter, which speaks of the unity of the church. The vehement outburst at verses 17 to 20 is not as unnatural as it may appear. Such severity of mood and expression appears at various points in the epistle (2:1-5; 3:8; 6:1-3; 9:19,20; 11:20; 14:15,16). In addition, the apparent lack of organization in the chapter is somewhat relieved by the fact that Paul ends other epistles in a similar way, especially 1 Corinthians. If Paul wrote Rom. 16:17-20 in his own hand, this would further explain the intrusion of the passage between the list of greetings interrupted at verse 16 and resumed in verse 21.

In conclusion, this writer concurs with those scholars who view Romans 16 as a unified whole, which fits well with the rest of the epistle in all respects. Properly understood verses 17 to 20 are not only a part of Romans, but may be regarded as a kind of capstone for the entire epistle.

#### Textual Variants

The problem of establishing the correct text from the various variants is comparatively simple. Most of the variants can be easily explained. In no case does an alternate reading seriously effect the meaning of the passage. With the possible exception of <sup>ς</sup>ΕΚΚΛΙΨΕΤΕ, the Nestle text is well supported by the best manuscripts. The Nestle text is normative for this study.

### CHAPTER III

#### EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 16:17-20

##### Introduction

In view of the exegetical problems raised with regard to Rom. 16:17-20, particularly in Missouri Synod circles, it becomes necessary to set forth a clear, objective, and detailed exegetical study of the text at hand. The conclusions and summaries in the subsequent chapters are drawn from the data discussed here. The evidence presented is also intended to serve as the basis for the evaluation and critique of the interpretations of Rom. 16:17-20 discussed in Chapter VI. As will be immediately apparent from the sub-headings, the material is arranged in a series of short studies: first on important words and concepts in verses 17 and 18, and then on several significant grammatical and syntactical problems in the text. Since no serious problems are raised in verses 19 and 20, little space has been given them. A summary statement relating these two verses to 17 and 18 and to the rest of the epistle is included at the end of the chapter. While the exegesis is intended to be objective it admittedly takes into consideration other interpretations that have been put on the passage, particularly by writers in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

Parakaleo

While the term παρακαλώ offers no particular problems, a few observations concerning its use in the New Testament and in the Pauline literature will be helpful for a full understanding of its meaning in Rom. 16:17. Taken in its context the proper meaning of the word is "request," "implore," "beseech," "appeal to," or "entreat."<sup>1</sup>

Παρακαλέω is so used in classical Greek literature<sup>2</sup> and in the papyri.<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew equivalent in the Septuagint is פָּרַץ.

It is characteristic of Paul to use the formula παρακαλέω εἰς ἡμῶν ἀδελφούς to express a personal and pastoral concern (Rom. 12:1; 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 16:15; 1 Thess. 5:14).

The use of παρακαλέω with the infinitive is also commonly found in Pauline writings as well as in the Book of Acts (2 Cor. 2:8; 6:1; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; Acts 8:31; 11:23).

Of the five occurrences of παρακαλέω in Rom. (12:1; 12:8[2]; 15:30; 16:17) three of the references (12:1; 15:30; 16:17) bear a striking resemblance to each other both in grammatical construction

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, translated by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 622.

<sup>2</sup>Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (9th edition revised by H. S. James and R. McKenzie; Oxford: University Press, 1953), p. 1311.

<sup>3</sup>J. H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1952), p. 484.

and with regard to the object or purpose of Paul's appeal. All three have the same basic construction, παρακαλῶ εἰς ἑνὴν ἰσχυρίαν with the infinitive, Rom. 12:1 and 16:17 add the present imperative. In each case Paul's appeal seems to spring from his desire that the Romans live together in love, peace, and unity. In Rom. 12:1 Paul's intent is that the Romans present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice. He then goes on to discuss the unity they share in Christ, and the love they are to show in Christian service to each other. Paul's request in Rom. 15:30 for the prayers of the saints at Rome on his own behalf rests on a common bond of unity in Christ already forged between himself and the Romans. The concern for harmony is again expressed in παρακαλῶ in Rom. 16:17, but this time from a negative viewpoint.

A similar pattern manifests itself in Paul's use of παρακαλέω in his other epistles. When the expression παρακαλῶ or παρακαλεῖσθε εἰς ἑνὴν ἰσχυρίαν appears, Paul's appeal to his brethren in the faith is, "that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind" (1 Cor. 1:10), to manifest a loving concern for all the weak (1 Thess. 5:14), to be subject to authorities and to each other (1 Cor. 16:15). When παρακαλεῖσθε occurs with the infinitive once again Paul's wish is that the brethren united in Christ live together in love and peace and in obedience to God (2 Cor. 6:1; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 4:10; Tim. 2:1).

Therefore since Paul's use of παρακαλέω often stems from his desire for unity one might infer that is the connotation intended in Rom. 16:17. It is not unfitting to suggest that by using

*παρακαλιῶν* Paul is concerned that the Romans continue to live together in Christ in a spirit of unity.

### De

According to Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich the adversative *δέ* is:

one of the most commonly used Gk. particles, used to connect one clause w. another when it is felt that there is some contrast betw. them, though the contrast is oft. scarcely discernible.<sup>4</sup>

The chief function of *δέ* in Rom. 16:17 therefore seems to be to connect the entire paragraph, verses 17 to 20, with the preceding verses.

Secondly *δέ* may serve to point up a certain contrast between those who strive for the unity of the Roman congregation (verse 16 and preceding), and those who would destroy it (verses 17, 18).

### Adelphos

In addition to denoting family relationships, the term *ἀδελφός* is often used of members of a religious community. It is so used in secular Greek literature,<sup>5</sup> and in the New Testament Jesus calls his followers, and especially the twelve disciples his "brethren." (Matt. 12:50; 28:10; John 20:17). Paul also addresses men who are joined together in Christ in a fellowship of love and harmony as *ἀδελφοί*. In addressing the Romans with the title "brethren" in some twenty occurrences, Paul expresses the deep and binding relationship he already has with his fellow Christians in Rome, and the close

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<sup>4</sup>Bauer, p. 170.

<sup>5</sup>Liddell and Scott, p. 20.



relationship the Romans have with each other in Christ as members of the church.

In Romans it is to be noted that Paul uses ἀδελφός five times in chapter 14 (14:10[2],13,15,21), to refer to the brethren weak in the faith. Here Paul is telling those strong in the faith to cease giving offense to the weak brethren by their eating habits. All Christians in Rome are brethren by virtue of their baptism.

In summarizing the significance of the ἀδελφός concept for Paul, Barclay states,

Herein lies the great truth that the church is meant to be a band of brothers. It is meant to be the family of God in which men are brethren one of another. When a Church is divided in spirit and in heart, when bitterness has invaded its fellowship, when the unforgiving spirit has caused breaches which remain unhealed, the church ceases to be a church, for a Church is no Church unless it be a brotherhood.<sup>7</sup>

This seems to be Paul's intent in using ἀδελφός particularly in Rom. 16:17.

As in the case with παρακαλώ the mere mention of the term ἀδελφός is indicative that the entire passage has something to say about the unity of the church at Rome.

### Skopeō

Σκοπέω is primarily a classical Greek word found in common usage from the time of Homer onward. There it means "examine,"

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<sup>7</sup>William Barclay, The Mind of St. Paul (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 240-241.

"consider," and "to look out for."<sup>8</sup> In the papyri the usual meaning of **ἑκπορεύω** is "watch," or "contemplate" in a general sense with no particular motives or reasons in mind.<sup>9</sup> The word is found twice in the Septuagint (Esther 8:13; 2 Macc. 4:5), and six times in the New Testament (Luke 11:35; 2 Cor. 4:18; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 6:1; Phil. 2:4; 3:17).

In the New Testament, where the word is used only in the present and imperfect tense with a personal object, the meaning is slightly intensified. The concept of casual observation gives way to that of more careful watching. A note of caution is inherent in the use of the word. Thus the meanings "observe carefully," "look out for," and "keep one's eye on," suffice for most New Testament passages.<sup>10</sup>

In Luke 11:35 Christ cautions his hearers against the error of the Pharisees, and in Gal. 6:1 Paul warns the Galatians against the misuse of their Christian freedom. The watching idea in **ἑκπορεύω** is akin to the "beware" element in **βλέπω** (Phil. 3:2), but it is not so strong as **κατασκοπέω**, meaning "to lie in wait for."

Paul's use of **ἑκπορεύω** in Rom. 16:17 indicates that responsible and discerning action is required of the saints at Rome. They are not to ignore the action of the errorists as unimportant, nor are they to become heresy hunters and make it their primary business to spy out

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<sup>8</sup>Liddell and Scott, pp. 161-162.

<sup>9</sup>Moulton and Milligan, p. 579.

<sup>10</sup>Bauer, p. 764.

schismatics. All watching is to be carried out in a spirit of love in response to and within the framework of the Gospel.

### Dichostasias

The term *διχοστασίας*, derived from *διχοστασίω* meaning to "disagree" or to "cut apart," literally means a "standing apart," in which all fellowship and togetherness are gone.<sup>11</sup> It is correctly translated into English as "dissensions," or "divisions." In its comparatively few occurrences in the available literature, the term is taken in a rather general sense. It is difficult if not impossible to determine precisely the type of division designated by *διχοστασία*. As it occurs in secular Greek, *διχοστασία* means a dissension or sedition of a general or political nature. For example *διχοστασία* is used by Herodotus of the situation resulting when one or two commanders change sides in a military campaign. Plato notes that in the days of *διχοστασία* a faithful man is worth his weight in gold.<sup>12</sup> The term occurs once in the Septuagint in 1 Macc. 3:29 where it describes national unrest following new legislation inaugurated by Antiochus Epiphanes.

*Διχοστασία* occurs twice in the New Testament, in Rom. 16:17 and in Gal. 5:20. It is also mentioned in a variant reading of 1 Cor. 3:3. In Gal. 5:20 *διχοστασίας* occurs in the plural with *ἐπισημα*

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<sup>11</sup>William Barclay, Flesh and Spirit, An Examination of Galatians 5:19-23 (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962), p. 57.

<sup>12</sup>Liddell and Scott, p. 439.

and *ἀσέλγεια* as one of the works of the flesh (verse 19), the result of which is exclusion from the Kingdom of God (verse 21). The seriousness of such activity lies in the fact that in the life of the Christian who fully understands his freedom from the Law (Romans 7, 8; Galatians 5), such vices do not occur. Rather the free Christian man does the works of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Such works include love for the brother and concern for the harmony and peace of the Church (Romans 12). The distinction between *ἀσέλγεια* and its companion *ἀσέβεια* seems to be that *ἀσέλγεια* is more general and comprehensive than the more carefully organized and specific *ἀσέβεια*. Cremer is correct when he states:

*Ἀσέλγεια* is the springing up of party divisions, a step towards sects and heresies; it disturbs the union of the church . . . .<sup>13</sup>

Barclay further concludes:

The word denotes a state of things in which men are divided, in which feuds flourish, and in which unity is destroyed.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore *ἀσέλγεια* in Rom. 16:17 is best taken as referring to divisions in general, with possible reference to the situation described in chapter 14. To force the term to mean doctrinal dissensions would do injustice to the word. What is important is that dissensions

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<sup>13</sup>Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, translated from the latest German edition by William Urwick (4th English edition with supplement, reprinted; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1954), p. 740.

<sup>14</sup>Barclay, Flesh and Spirit, p. 56.

destroy the unity of the congregation. **ΔιχοσταΓεία** is a word for disunity whatever its particular manifestation.

Skandalon<sup>15</sup>

**Σκάνδαλον** and its verbal equivalent **σκανδαλίζω** are late Greek words more common in the Septuagint and in the New Testament than elsewhere in the available literature. Neither term occurs in classical Greek. Both are conspicuously lacking in the writings of the later Church fathers. **Σκάνδαλον** apparently originates in the classical Greek word **σκανδαλίθριον**, as used by Pollianus to mean the bait stick or trigger of a trap. It is used figuratively by Aristophanes to mean a word trap.<sup>16</sup> Allen clearly shows that this "trap" idea is inherent in the **σκάνδαλον** concept both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament.<sup>17</sup>

In the Septuagint **σκάνδαλον** is commonly used to translate the Hebrew words **פֶּתֶן**, "trap," and **שִׁבְרָה**, "stumbling block."<sup>18</sup> **Σκάνδαλον** when used for **שִׁבְרָה** indicates some kind of hindrance

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<sup>15</sup>Much of the following discussion on **σκάνδαλον** is based on Gustav Staehlin, "**Σκάνδαλον, σκανδαλίζω**," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1961), VII, 338-358.

<sup>16</sup>Liddell and Scott, p. 1604.

<sup>17</sup>W. C. Allen, The Gospel According to St. Mark with Introduction and Notes (London: Rivingtons, 1915), pp. 199-202.

<sup>18</sup>Of minor importance are two other words translated by **σκάνδαλον**: **שִׁבְרָה** (Ps. 49:13), meaning "folly" or "foolish confidence," and **שִׁבְרָה** (Ps. 50:20), meaning "blemish" or "fault."

over which one can stumble (Lev. 19:14) or a cause of harm or disaster (Ps. 119:165). The most common meaning of **σκαύδαλον** in the Septuagint is "trap," either in a literal or figurative sense from the Hebrew **לִּפְתָּיִם**.<sup>19</sup> (Joshua 23:13; Judg. 2:3; 8:27; 1 Sam. 18:21; Judith 5:1; 5:20; 12:2; Ps. 69:22; 106:36; 140:5; 141:9). In Joshua 23:13; Ps. 69:22; 140:5; and 141:9; **σκαύδαλον** is used with **παγέτις** meaning "trap."

Used figuratively in the Septuagint **σκαύδαλον** is often related to idolatry. Various kinds of **σκαυδάλα** destroy Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh, and bring destruction to His chosen people. God is the cause of salvation, while idols, forces of evil, and heathen nations are causes of destruction (Joshua 23:13; Judg. 2:3; 5:20; 8:27; Ps. 69:22; 106:36; 141:9; Wisdom 14:11). The two original pictures of the stumbling block and the trap thus begin to fade in the Septuagint, and the development continues in the New Testament. At the same time the term retains the basic elements the two original pictures convey.

**Σκαύδαλον** continues to be a cause of destruction, by means of enticement, use of the unexpected, and through the use of power and force.

**Σκαυδάλον** in the New Testament, where it is used fifteen times, is derived from the usage of the word in the Septuagint. Generally **σκαυδάλον** is connected with man's relationship with his God. It is the beginning of a cause of behavior that leads an individual to complete ruin. In the Gospels **σκαυδάλα** are the necessary result of the

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<sup>19</sup> **לִּפְתָּיִם** means primarily "hunter's snare," but also has the connotation of a cause of bad luck or destruction in Ex. 10:17 and 1 Sam. 18:21.

proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 16:23). In the thought of St. Paul, **σκαύδαλον** receives a double emphasis. As Christ is the source of salvation, Christ, the gospel, and the cross can and indeed must be a cause of destruction or a hindrance for one to come to faith, especially for the Jews (Rom. 9:32,33; 11:9; 1 Peter 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11). On the other hand **σκαύδαλον** is a cause for sin, leading to the destruction of one already in the faith (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:13; Rev. 2:14).

The use of **σκαύδαλον** and its equivalents in Romans is especially interesting and significant for understanding the word in Rom. 16:17. In Rom. 9:32,33, both **πρόσκομμα** and **σκαύδαλον** are used of the Jews when Paul quotes Is. 8:14. In Rom. 11:9 **παγίς** and **σκαύδαλον** are similarly employed in a quotation of Ps. 69:22,23. The only other reference to the concept is Romans 14, where **σκαύδαλον** is used in verse 13. A synonym, **πρόσκομμα**, is used in verses 13 and 20, and **σκαυδαλίω** is used in verse 21. In this context strong, mature Christians had become a stumbling block to those weak in the faith, in much the same way as the men described in Rom. 16:17.

Understood in this background the meaning of **σκαύδαλον** is rather full and deep. All the characteristics of the trap and stumbling block seem to be implied: the unexpected, the subtle (verse 18), and it is that which leads to the apostasy of the individual and disrupts the unity of the church. Since the precise nature of the **σκαύδαλον** in any one place in the New Testament is usually determined by the context, some have suggested that the particular **σκαύδαλον** in Rome

were false doctrines of false teachers. However on the basis of the use of the word in chapter 14, the immediate occasion for the **σκανύδαλα** rather appears to be the situation described there.

However, in a larger and more general way, the point of **σκανύδαλον** is not only its immediate cause, but its result. It is the cause of a course of sin ending in destruction. The men described by Paul, by causing offenses not only act as an impediment to further growth, but they have become a cause for the Roman Christians to fall from the faith. Their activity is against the Gospel and contrary to the teaching the Romans received. The result of their work, if unchecked, is both the disruption of the unity of the Roman Church and the death and destruction of its members. For this reason they must be avoided.

#### Didache

While the term **τὴν διδαχήν** offers no particular difficulty, a study of "teaching" in the New Testament with respect to the delineation of its scope and contents is helpful for the understanding of the text at hand. The classical Greek use of **διδαχή** puts emphasis on the verbal sense of the term. Secular writers such as Heroditus, Thucydides, and Plato understand **διδαχή** as a teaching act.<sup>20</sup> At the same time the passive sense with emphasis on the content of the teaching occurs, but

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<sup>20</sup>Liddell and Scott, p. 442.



with much less frequency.<sup>21</sup> *διδάχη* occurs in the Septuagint only at the heading of Psalm 60.

As in classical Greek literature, so *διδάχη* in the New Testament can be divided into a verbal sense, emphasizing teaching as activity (Mark 4:2; 12:38) or into a passive sense describing what is taught. Such clear distinctions, however, become ambiguous at times when both ideas are included in *διδάχη*.<sup>22</sup>

*διδάχη* as used in the Synoptic Gospels refers to the totality of Christ's teachings.<sup>23</sup> Jesus' proclamation of God's will is inclusive; it is not a specific dogmatic formulation or an ethical system. Upon hearing Jesus' new and comprehensive teaching, the crowds are astonished (Matt. 7:28; 22:33; Mark 1:22,27; 4:2; 11:18; Luke 4:32). In a similar way in the Johannine literature all the teachings of Christ are included in *διδάχη* (John 7:16; 18:19; 2 John 9,10).

The only clear New Testament exception is a loose and inclusive understanding of *διδάχη* is at Heb. 6:2, and also perhaps in Heb. 13:7, where the term refers to a systematized set of teachings. Such a particular meaning of *διδάχη* develops further and later in the Apostolic Fathers.<sup>24</sup> The idea of teaching as doctrine or a system of teachings is not foreign to the New Testament, but it is connected more with the

<sup>21</sup>Liddell and Scott, p. 442.

<sup>22</sup>Bauer, p. 191.

<sup>23</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "*διδάχη*," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935), II, 166-167.

<sup>24</sup>Rengstorff, II, 167.

term *διδασκαλία* (Rom. 7:7; 2 Tim. 3:16) than with *διδασχῆ* .

St. Paul uses the term *διδασχῆ* six times (Rom. 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor. 14:6,26; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9), and his usage of the word generally follows that of the remainder of the New Testament.

*Διδασχῆ* or "that which is taught" is for Paul all Christian teaching, which includes the teaching of Christ, of the apostles, and Paul's own teaching which he received from Christ (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1-3; Galatians 1). In Rom. 6:17, a close parallel to Rom. 16:17, the "standard of teaching," *τύπον διδασχῆς* , to which the Romans are committed hails back to their conversion and includes all that the Romans received and learned to make them Christians.

In Rom. 16:17, it is likely that the passive element of *διδασχῆ* is intended, because Paul usually omits the article when he uses the word in its active sense (1 Cor. 14:6,26; 2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Titus 1:9). Further in agreement with New Testament usage, Paul uses *διδασχῆ* at Rom. 16:17 in a general and full sense. *Διδασχῆ* goes beyond Paul's own teaching in Romans. It is more than the teaching of the apostles. It is all the teaching from and about Jesus Christ. *Διδασχῆ* is the entire teaching of Christianity. It is everything that makes a man a Christian. It is all he hears, learns, obeys, and believes that enables him to live the Christian life. *Διδασχῆ* for Paul is almost synonymous with *εὐαγγελίον* and *καρύσμα* (Rom. 16:25). The article in *τὴν διδασχῆν* is specific, but it does not limit the contents of the *διδασχῆ* to a specific doctrine or teaching such as a doctrine of the unity of the church or a doctrine concerning false teaching. Rather, as

Sanday and Headlam state in their paraphrase of this passage, the **εὐαγγέλιον** which the Romans had learned is simply "the Gospel."<sup>25</sup>

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Ekklino

The root of the verb **ἐκκλύω** lies in classical Greek. The original meaning of the word as employed by Hippocrates is "bend out of the regular line," "bend outward or away," in anthesis to **ἐμφλύω**, "to bend inward." Used intransitively by Thucydides, **ἐκκλύω** is a turning away from someone, **ἀπὸ τίνος**. When **ἐκκλύω** takes the accusative and the direct object, it means "avoid" or "shun" in writers such as Plato, Polybius, and Demades."<sup>26</sup>

The term is used over one hundred fifty times in the Septuagint where it follows the general pattern of Greek usage. The original meaning of **ἐκκλύω** seems to be inherent in most occurrences of the term, particularly in Gen. 19:2,3 where Lot invites two angels to turn aside from their journey and tarry with him. As in Greek literature the intransitive use of **ἐκκλύω** with **ἀπὸ** is well established, occurring more than thirty times in the Septuagint. With or without **ἀπὸ**, **ἐκκλύω** generally is used negatively and has religious and moral implications. Warnings against turning or deviating from the Law of God, either to the right or to the left are given several times (Num. 21:17; Deut. 17:11; Joshua 1:7). Prescriptions against turning

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<sup>25</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary; (5th edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), p. 429.

<sup>26</sup>Liddell and Scott, p. 509.

from the Way of Yahweh are also heard (Ps. 44:18; Job 23:11; 24:4). It is commendable to turn from evil (Ps. 34:11), or from one's enemy (Deut. 20:3). On the other hand Israel is warned against turning from Yahweh himself (Deut. 29:8; 1 Sam. 12:20; 2 Chron. 34:33), lest Yahweh turn away from Israel (Ps. 27:9). While ἐκκλείω is normally used in an ethical sense with regard to man's relationship to God, evil, and the Law, the verb also describes the breach in relationships between people, as between Moses and Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6) and between David and Saul (1 Sam. 18:11). The ass turns from Balaam (Num. 32:23), and the nation of Israel turns from Edom (Num. 20:21).

By New Testament times ἐκκλείω apparently passed out of general usage. It is rarely found in the contemporary literature,<sup>27</sup> and its only independent use in the New Testament is in Rom. 16:17. Ἐκκλείω occurs in Rom. 3:12 as a direct quote of Ps. 14:4 and as a paraphrase of Ps. 54:3 in the Septuagint in reference to deviating from the Law of God. The term also occurs in a similar way at 1 Peter 3:11 in a paraphrase of Ps. 34:14 in connection with turning away from evil.

Based on the classical Greek and Septuagint usage of ἐκκλείω, an acceptable translation of the term in Rom. 16:17 would be "turn away from," "steer clear," or "avoid." It is difficult if not impossible to determine more precisely to what extent such men should be "avoided" by the Romans. In the Septuagint ἐκκλείω means simply to turn away from. It is the context in which the word is used that indicates to what extent the relationship described is to be severed. While complete

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<sup>27</sup>Moulton and Milligan, p. 195.

and final separation is often indicated in the Septuagint, such extreme action is not always called for. The root meaning of the word would indicate that separation need not be complete nor final nor irrevocable.

Therefore the explicit meaning of ἐκκλίω in Rom. 16:17 should be handled with caution in applying the term to the situation at Rome or any other place. R. C. H. Lenski<sup>28</sup> for example seems to have gone too far when he takes ἐκκλίω to mean final and complete separation from the men involved and their teaching on all levels of contact. The term is best taken in a general and somewhat ambiguous sense. If one were to conjecture a more precise meaning for ἐκκλίω it would appear that some kind of partial separation is meant as Leenhardt states:

Paul does not say that they should be driven out, but that they should be prevented from exercising their injurious influence. The "holiness" of the people of God has always required a certain rigour of government and corporate discipline. One cannot afford to play with fire nor tamper with deadly persons.

The context in verse 18 would indicate the Romans are to turn away from the errorists insofar as, and to the extent which, these men themselves have turned from obedience to Christ and have jeopardized the unity of the congregation. A complete severance of fellowship would be a last resort. The purpose of the action against the offenders is not only for the preservation of the congregation, but also that even the offender might return to the fellowship of believers.

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<sup>28</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1945), p. 916.

<sup>29</sup>Franz J. Leenhardt, The Epistle to the Romans, translated by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), p. 385.

Douleuo and Alla

When in verse 18 Paul begins to describe the errorists, he sets up a clear anthesis between their serving the Lord and their serving their stomachs. *Δουλεύω* simply means to perform the duties of a slave. It implies unqualified obedience and a total binding. Here it denotes the religious obligation of man to God where man is *δοῦλος* and God is *κύριος*. The term is widely used in the Pauline literature and particularly in the Epistles to the Romans. A useful parallel may be Rom. 14:18. The importance of serving the Lord and hence also the contrast may be heightened by Paul's word order in placing *ἐν κυρίῳ* in first position. By putting emphasis on the *κυριῶ* he implies that it is the Lord that these men do not serve by giving undue attention to their stomachs.

While a clear contrast is already intended between serving the Lord and one's belly in the use of *δουλεύω* the anthesis is intensified in the use of *οὐ . . . ἀλλά*. This construction often appears in Romans, and it normally implies a complete separation between the two alternatives presented.<sup>30</sup> Thus it would seem that Paul's intent is to point out clearly to his hearers the impossibility of serving both one's belly and the Lord Christ. Since the errorists serve their belly, they do not serve Christ. Hence they should be separated from the brethren, whose obedience is beyond reproach.

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<sup>30</sup> F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, translated by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 232; and Nigel Turner, "Vol. III, Syntax," in A Grammar of New Testament Greek, by James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), p. 329.

Koilia

Much discussion has centered around the word *κοιλία* both concerning its meaning in Rom. 16:18, and with regard to its use in identifying the men whom Paul discusses in the passage. The basic meaning of the word is simple and uncomplicated. *κοιλία* comes from *κοῦλος*, meaning "hollow."<sup>31</sup> In classical Greek the word denotes simply "belly" or any part of the abdominal cavity such as intestines, womb, or any cavity of the body such as a bone socket, lungs, etcetera.<sup>32</sup> The use of *κοιλία* in Greek literature contemporary with the New Testament also indicates the word is normally taken in a literal way to mean abdomen or stomach.<sup>33</sup> In most occurrences of the term in the Septuagint, *κοιλία* translates the Hebrew *בֶּטֶן* meaning "belly," "body," or "womb." However, *κοιλία* also takes on an added meaning in the Septuagint somewhat akin to *καρδιά*, or inmost self (Job. 15:35; Prov. 20:27; Wisdom 51:21; Ps. 40:8). In the New Testament with three possible exceptions (Rom. 16:18; John 7:38; Phil. 3:19), *κοιλία* means either belly (Matt. 12:40; 15:17; Mark 7:19; Luke 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:13; Rev. 10:9,10), or "womb" (Matt. 19:12; Luke 1:15,41,42,44; 2:21; 11:27; 23:29; John 3:4; Acts 3:2; 14:8; Gal. 1:15). However, since

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<sup>31</sup>G. Abbot-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (3rd edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1953), p. 250.

<sup>32</sup>Liddell and Scott, pp. 966-967.

<sup>33</sup>Moulton and Milligan, p. 349.

neither of these literal meanings at first seem to fit the situation in Rom. 16:18, several alternate possibilities have been offered.

One possibility would be to take *κοιλία* in the sense of heart or inmost self as in the Septuagint and perhaps in John 7:38. However such a meaning is called into question both by the absence of Pauline parallels, and such a meaning does not seem to fit the context. If this is the intent here, one might expect a stronger, or more antithetic alternative to serving Christ than the term *κοιλία*.

Others have taken *κοιλία* in a kind of derived literal sense. Barrett,<sup>34</sup> Gaenssle,<sup>35</sup> and Behm<sup>36</sup> take *κοιλία* as applicable to preoccupation with Jewish food laws, making it possible to apply the passage to Judaizers. Others have taken *κοιλία* more in the sense of excesses in eating and gluttony, such as Luther<sup>37</sup> and Gifford.<sup>38</sup> Such commentators would apply the passage to a group composed of antinomians or libertines. Others, such as Leenhardt, allow for both possibilities:

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<sup>34</sup>C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1957), p. 385.

<sup>35</sup>Carl Gaenssle, "What Manner of Men Are They?" (mimeographed monograph, n.d.), p. 9,10.

<sup>36</sup>Johannes Behm, "*κοιλία*" in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938), III, 758.

<sup>37</sup>Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis Chapters 15-20, in Luther's Works, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), III, 197.

<sup>38</sup>E. H. Gifford, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (London: John Murray, 1886), p. 235.



This very brief note V. 17-20 could designate both judaizers and gnostics; the former would be sarcastically stigmatized as servants of their stomachs, of which their stupid food laws oblige them to be constantly thinking. The latter would be appropriately condemned as libertines enslaved to the delights of the flesh.<sup>39</sup>

The same objections present themselves here as with the first solution. The distinction between serving Christ and one's belly is still not sufficiently clear, and there is the absence of Pauline parallels.

A third and perhaps more plausible alternative is to take *Kochei* as one's belly opposed to Christ in the sense of deeply self-interested motives, selfishness, and pride stemming from the belly. This would make more sense than *Kochi* as sensualists or law-keepers, and it goes one step beyond the first suggestion of innermost self. Instead of serving Christ these men go to the other extreme in serving their own sinful, base interests, and are diametrically opposed to the Divine. *Kochei* might then be understood in terms of Paul's dichotomy between the old and the new aeons, and between flesh and spirit understood in that light. Besides fitting the context, this interpretation has the support of a number of notable scholars such as Sanday and Headlam who state:

These false teachers are described as being self-interested in their motives . . . . These words do not in this case appear to mean that their habits are lax and epicurean, but that their motives are interested, and their conceptions and objects are inadequate.<sup>40</sup>

While the most plausible of the three interpretations, this solution is not without its difficulties. If the contrast is to be

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<sup>39</sup>Leenhardt, p. 385.

<sup>40</sup>Sanday and Headlam, p. 430.

between the old aeon and the new, where man is a slave to God, or forces within himself opposed to God, one might wonder why Paul uses *κοιλία* and not a clearer term to express himself. It would seem that Paul implies something different in using *κοιλία*. Here again there are no clear parallels in the Pauline literature to such a meaning for *κοιλία*. Phil. 3:19, which is sometimes used in support, is in itself a contra-verted passage.

Instead of attempting to attach figurative or spiritual significance to *κοιλία* in Rom. 16:18 as others have done, it would be much simpler and hermeneutically acceptable to take *κοιλία* in its simple literal sense as "belly." It has already been noted that *κοιλία* is so understood in all the literature including that of Paul. In addition such lexicographers as Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich understand *κοιλία* here in this way.<sup>41</sup> The chief difficulty with this position is that *κοιλία* then makes little sense in the immediate context in the contrast with serving our Lord Christ. However, when Rom. 16:17,18 is understood in its larger context in Romans, the difficulty disappears, and the meaning of Paul's warning and his use of *κοιλία* becomes clear.

The use of *κοιλία* as "belly" in chapter 16 may be understood in terms of the situation described by Paul in chapter 14. While the term *κοιλία* is not used in chapter 14, the situation described in both places is strikingly similar. The problem in chapter 14 is that certain of the more "stable" Christians by their eating habits were causing their weaker brethren to sin and fall from the faith. In Rom. 14:15 in speaking to

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<sup>41</sup>Bauer, P. 438.

the "strong" Paul says: "if your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love." Comparing the two passages, "what you eat" bears a certain affinity to *κοιλία* and "walking in love" corresponds to serving Christ. The same *οὐ . . . ἀλλὰ* construction appears in Rom. 14:17: "The kingdom of God does not mean food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." In Rom. 14:20 Paul warns: "do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God." Further it is significant to note that it is Paul's concern that the strong obey, *δουλεύω*, Christ in 14:18 and in 16:18. In both passages Paul's concern is that the harmony of the congregation be maintained.

When the two passages in chapters 14 and 16 are thus connected the emerging picture is of a group of men, who are apparently members of the congregation at Rome. By their unconcern for the welfare of the weaker brethren they show themselves to be more concerned with their own stomach than for their brethren. They are more interested in what they eat than in serving Christ. They are more interested in satisfying themselves than in upbuilding the body of Christ in love, harmony, and peace.

Thus founded on a literal understanding a more figurative interpretation of *κοιλία* may also be possible. These men are serving themselves, whether they are conscious of it or not. They have their own selfish interests at heart. Because they have shown themselves as not being fully committed to Christ by their action toward their brethren, they are living to themselves, perhaps in the sense of 2 Cor. 5:14,15.

Chrestologias and Eulogia

χρηστολογία is a combination of χρηστός meaning "useful," "worthy," "good," and λόγος. A difficulty in defining the word arises because of its rarity in the available literature. Not only is χρηστολογία a hapax legomenon in the New Testament, but it does not appear in the Septuagint or in other Greek versions of the Old Testament. The word is not to be found in classical or contemporary Greek literature. However, χρηστολογία does appear in post-biblical Greek, notably in the ecclesiastical fathers: Origin, Alexander of Alexandria, and Cyrillus of Jerusalem,<sup>42</sup> where it means "kind speaking," almost always in a good sense.

One of the closest parallels to the usage of χρηστολογία in Rom. 16:18 is in Julius Capitolinus, Pertinax 13: "χρηστολογούν eum appelantes qui beni loqueretur et male faceret," where it clearly means "smooth, plausible, speech" in a derogatory sense.<sup>43</sup> Barclay catches the sense of the passage well:

The Greeks themselves defined a chrestologos as "a man who speaks well and who acts ill." He is the kind of man who, behind a facade of pious and religious words, is a bad influence, the man who leads astray, not by direct attack, but by subtlety, the man who pretends to serve Christ, but who in reality is destroying the faith.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>E. A. Sophocles, Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., [1957]), II, 1170.

<sup>43</sup>Bauer, p. 894.

<sup>44</sup>William Barclay, The Letter to the Romans (2nd edition; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), p. 239.

The translation for *χρησεολογίας* may be expected to vary, but the sense of the word used in Rom. 16:18 with *εὐλογίας* is "nice sounding words," "plausible arguments," or simply "soft talk." Thus the description here somewhat fits that given Paul's opponents in 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

*Εὐλογία* used with *χρησεολογίας* in Rom. 16:18 means "well chosen (but untrue) words," "flattery."<sup>45</sup> It is good speaking but in a negative sense. This specialized use of *εὐλογία* originates in profane Greek where in Plato's Republic and in Lucian's Lexiphanes I *εὐλογία* means "good speaking," but where a false argument is involved.<sup>46</sup>

A conceivable reason for the unusual use both of *χρησεολογίας* and *εὐλογίας* may be an intended alliteration in their common suffix, *λογία*. The two words are slightly different, yet similar in meaning. Both are employed through devious and deceptive means, and both are negative in their effect and result. Their connotation is that of dishonest deception, perhaps somewhat akin to the *σκηνόδετον* of verse 17, and like the action of Satan himself in verse 20.

#### Exapatāo

*Ἐξαπατεῖν* is an intensified form of *ἀπατάω*, and it is peculiar to the Pauline writings in the New Testament. It means simply to "deceive," "cheat," or to "lead someone astray."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Bauer, p. 232.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

In addition the word as employed by Paul carries distinct theological significance. The connotation in Rom. 16:18 and in the other occurrences of *ἐξαπατῶ* in the New Testament is that the personal object of the verb is led astray by the subjective deceiver in matters pertaining to his faith. That is he is led away from God in a way similar to that implied by *πλανῶ*. The result of the deception is the individual's death and destruction.. In Rom. 7:11 sin is the deceiver and death is the result of its work. Paul speaks of the danger of self-deception in 1 Cor. 3:18. In 2 Thess. 2:3 Paul warns against the deception of false expectations of the second coming of Christ. Eve was deceived and fell into sin (1 Tim. 2:14). As Eve was deceived by the cunning of the serpent, the Corinthians were in danger of being led astray from sincere and pure devotion to Christ through the devisive action and false teaching of Paul's opponents at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:3-5). Thus in Rom. 16:18 it would not be out of order to render the passage "they deceive the hearts of the innocent, with regard to their faith." The motives of the errorists are not here called into question, but rather the action itself.

#### Akakon

As the first part of verse 18 describes the type of people who are engaged in the work of deception, and their methodology, *ἀκακῶν* describes the type of people they attack. *ἄνακός* means "innocent," "blameless," or "upright." It is so used in the Septuagint (Job 2:3; 8:20; 38:5; Ps. 25:21; Prov. 1:4,22; 2:21; 8:5; 13:7; 14:15; 15:10,23; 21:11; Jer. 11:19) and in Heb. 11:19. The implication seems to be that since such people are relatively untainted with evil, and living in

conformity to the will of God, they are the target of concentrated efforts of Satanic deceivers. In addition Cremer suggests that since such people are innocent, they may also be somewhat naive or unsuspecting of the deceiving intruders.<sup>48</sup> For whatever reason, Paul's concern here is that the Roman Christians are in danger of falling victim to the deceivers and his intent is to place them on their guard. One might even conjecture some similarity between the ἀκδηῶν in Rom. 16:18 and the ἀποδεικνύοντες mentioned in Rom. 14:2.

#### The Para Prepositional Phrase

While παρά with the accusative primarily designates movement to a position or alongside it, the meaning "beside" or "beyond is the point of departure for the adversive sense, "against," "contrary to," or "opposed to."<sup>49</sup> Moulton and Milligan cite several references where παρά is used this way in New Testament times<sup>50</sup> and Blass and DeBrunner cite examples from other Greek literature.<sup>51</sup> Ample precedence may also be found in the Pauline literature for this usage, where παρά is often used in contrast to ἀντι (Rom. 1:26; 4:18; 11:24; 1 Cor. 3:11; Gal. 1:8,9). Since most reputable lexicographers also take παρά as "against" in Rom. 16:17, there is little doubt of its correct meaning. The contrast in verse 17

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<sup>48</sup>Cremer, p. 327.

<sup>49</sup>E. H. Riesenfeld, "παρά," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1954), V, 732.

<sup>50</sup>Moulton and Milligan, p. 479.

<sup>51</sup>Blass and DeBrunner, p. 123.

is drawn out in verse 18 as action against both the teaching and against the Christ (Gal. 1:8,9).

While the meaning of *παρά* is unquestioned, the use of the prepositional phrase headed by *παρά* has been and continues to be an important subject of debate. The difficulty centers in the grammatical classification of the phrase which greatly influences the passage's subsequent interpretation and meaning. Two grammatical possibilities present themselves. The *παρά* prepositional phrase could be adverbial connected with *τοὺς παρεούνας*, or it can be taken as an adjectival phrase modifying *τὰς διδασκαλίας καὶ τὰ σκάνδαλα*. If one were to adopt the later, Paul's warning would be essentially against false teachers and erroneous teachings; that is, what the errorists teach is against the teaching the Roman Christians have received, and their teaching causes dissensions and death traps. On the other hand if the *παρά* phrase modifies *τοὺς παρεούνας* it is primarily the actions of the errorists that is causing dissensions and death traps. The thrust of Paul's warning then would not simply be against false teachers but against people who would destroy the unity and harmony of the congregation at Rome, by any means. Thus what appears as a subtle shift in emphasis seriously alters the meaning of the passage and its subsequent application.

A serious study of both the text and the context of Rom. 16:17 would indicate that the *παρά* phrase is an adverbial prepositional phrase modifying the participle *τοὺς παρεούνας*. There are strong arguments in favor of taking *παρά* as an adjectival



phrase.<sup>52</sup> However good grammatical usage, and the meaning of the phrase in light of its context in Romans would suggest it is adverbial.

There are two important grammatical arguments for taking adverbially. In the first place, the close relationship between prepositions and adverbs in the Greek language would favor taking this view. Moule notes that prepositions were originally adverbs.<sup>53</sup> Blass and DeBrunner<sup>54</sup> as well as Nigel Turner<sup>55</sup> note that the preposition is almost always used as an adverb in classical and New Testament Greek. Secondly, when a preposition is used attributively to further define a noun, and when the preposition comes after the noun, as in Rom. 16:17, the article usually comes before the preposition as Turner states:

In the same way that adjectives, pronouns, pronominal adjectives, and nouns in gen. or dat. or accus., may be employed as attributive phrases defining a noun, so also may a prepositional expression be used. The class. arrangement is still found . . . . If this prepositional expression stands in post-position, the repetition of the art. is necessary for the sake of clarity.<sup>56</sup>

While certain variations do occur (Rom. 14:17; 2 Cor. 12:2; Acts 16:23), these are comparatively rare and are the exception to the rule. If the  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota$  phrase were adjectival, one would expect the article  $\tau\omicron$

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<sup>52</sup>One of the most extensive studies defending this view is Robert G. Hoerber, A Grammatical Study of Romans 16,17 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, n.d.), passim.

<sup>53</sup>C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 48.

<sup>54</sup>Blass and DeBrunner, p. 110.

<sup>55</sup>Turner, p. 249.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

preceeding it, to clarify its use. Thus according to normal grammatical usage it would be preferable to take the *ἵνα* phrase adverbially.

Perhaps a more convincing argument for taking *ἵνα* adverbially lies in the context. If one were to take Rom. 16:17-20 as a warning against false teachers he would have difficulty in integrating it into the general thought of the epistle. Paul does not speak anywhere in Romans of the danger of false teachers infiltrating the congregation. Taken this way the warning would appear to be an intrusion into the text. On the other hand if the *ἵνα* phrase is adverbial, and the warning speaks of those who would destroy the unity of the Roman congregation, it fits well with the thought of the epistle. Paul's concern for Christian harmony, peace, and love is reflected throughout the epistle, particularly in chapter 12 to 16. In chapter 16 the unity motif finds expression in the kiss of peace in verse 16 and in the greetings to the Romans from fellow Christians elsewhere. Rom. 16:17-20 thus forms a fitting climax for the epistle. Here is a practical application of Paul's doctrinal and ethical teachings throughout Romans.

Also to be considered in determining the use of *ἵνα* in Rom. 16:17 are the opinions of reputable scholars. Reflecting the "traditional" interpretation many scholars from Chrysostom<sup>57</sup> onward, including Sanday and Headlam,<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> John Chrysostom, The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans, in Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1941), VII, 500-501.

<sup>58</sup> Sanday and Headlam, p. 429.

Stoekhardt,<sup>59</sup> and Zahn<sup>60</sup> take  $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}$  as an adjectival phrase. However, in recent years the trend has been to take  $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}$  adverbially, as witnessed by such scholars as Michel,<sup>61</sup> Barth,<sup>62</sup> Barclay,<sup>63</sup> and Brunner.<sup>64</sup> In addition a number of recent English translations of the New Testament appear to interpret the passage adverbially as well.<sup>65</sup>

#### The Articles in Verse 17

Another grammatical problem that has a bearing on the interpretation of the text is the classification of the four articles in Rom. 16:17,  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ,  $\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ ,  $\tau\grave{\alpha}$ , and  $\tau\eta\nu$ . The articles may be taken in a generic or general sense, or they may be used in a more specific, individualized way. The use of the articles not only affects the meaning of the passage, but their use bears some relationship to the use of the  $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}$  prepositional phrase as well.

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<sup>59</sup>G. Stoekhardt, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), p. 642.

<sup>60</sup>Theodor Zahn, Der Brief des Paulus an die Roemer, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1910), VI, 611, 612.

<sup>61</sup>Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Roemer in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar ueber das Neue Testament (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1955), p. 346.

<sup>62</sup>Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 536.

<sup>63</sup>Barclay, The Letter to the Romans, p. 238.

<sup>64</sup>Emil Brunner, The Letter to the Romans, translated by H. A. Kennedy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 128.

<sup>65</sup>New English Bible, Revised Standard Version, and Today's English Version, are examples.

A brief study of the history and function of the Greek article would indicate that the particular, specific, or restrictive use of the article is its normal use. Robertson points out that the Greek article was originally a demonstrative pronoun pointing to a particular object. A noun did not need a prefix to make it definite. Later the particular noun required reinforcement by an explicit article.<sup>66</sup> Robertson further defines the use of the article this way:

The article, unlike the demonstrative, does not point out the object as far or near. It is not diectic. There is either contrast in the distinction drawn or allusion (anaphoric) to what is already mentioned or assumed as well known . . . . The article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger. It is a pointer. It is not essential to language, but certainly very convenient and useful . . . . Whenever the Greek article occurs, the object is certainly definite.<sup>67</sup>

Since the normal use of the article is its specific use, all four articles in Rom. 16:17 should be so understood unless good reasons can be found for taking them generically. For this reason Robertson so classifies all four articles.<sup>68</sup>

There is no problem in classifying the articles εὐὸς and τὴν as specific articles, since both have direct points of reference and modifiers in the immediate context. The particular teaching designated by τὴν διδαχὴν is the teaching "which you were taught," with apparent emphasis on the "you." The specific use of the article here does not limit the διδαχὴν to any particular doctrine, or group of

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<sup>66</sup> A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), pp. 754-755.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 755-756.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 756.

dogmas. It is simply the teaching the Romans had received from Paul and others. In a word it was the Gospel. The  $\tau\acute{o}\upsilon\varsigma$  . . .  $\pi\alpha\sigma\hat{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\varsigma$  likewise follows the specific use of the definite article, since it is modified by  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$   $\delta\epsilon\chi\omicron\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  ,  $\tau\acute{\alpha}$   $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\acute{\upsilon}\theta\alpha\lambda\alpha$  , and by  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha$  . . .  $\dot{\epsilon}\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ . In using the  $\tau\acute{o}\upsilon\varsigma$  it would seem that Paul has a specific group in mind, whose habit it is to cause dissensions in the Roman congregation and cause its members to lose their faith. Further the use of the specific article would seem to indicate that the group is already known to the Romans, and perhaps already active.

The two remaining articles,  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  and  $\tau\acute{\alpha}$  , present the interpreter with a more difficult problem. If the  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha$  phrase is adverbial, there is no direct modifier or qualifying phrase in the immediate context to justify the use of the specific articles. If the articles are specific, one would expect some qualifying phrase such as "among you" or "which you already know." Faced with this dilemma the natural course would then be to take the articles generically, indicating that any and all kinds of dissensions and offenses are meant. However, when Hoerber points out that there are serious grammatical objections to this,<sup>69</sup> one must either find a modifier from the context or one must take the phrase adjectivally and thus provide direct modifiers for the articles in question. It is this writer's opinion that the two articles are specific, that the  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha$  phrase is adverbial, and that the necessary modifiers can be found in the wider context of Romans. The following is offered in support of this conclusion.

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<sup>69</sup>Hoerber, p. 176.

In the first place the two articles, τῶν and τῶν are connected with abstract nouns. The normal use of abstract nouns in the New Testament argues in favor of taking the articles specifically. Turner notes that abstract nouns are usually specific in the New Testament, with or without the article.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, if Paul intended for διχοστασίαι and ἐκλύσεις to be understood in a general sense, he would have omitted the articles altogether. If abstract nouns are usually specific without the article, their use with the article would virtually demand they be taken specifically.

Now if the articles τῶν and τῶν are specific, one is faced with the problem of finding a direct modifier from the text or an indirect modifier from the context. If, as has been demonstrated, the πρόφα phrase is adverbial,<sup>71</sup> there is no direct modifier from the text, and it would appear the context offers little additional help. However, an examination of the wider context in Romans, and in particular the situation described in Romans 14, sheds additional light on the problem. If, as is suggested elsewhere,<sup>72</sup> the strong Christians who are offending the weak Christians in chapter 14 are the same people described by Paul in Rom. 16:17, here then is the missing modifier. Thus Paul is not speaking of dissensions and scandals in general, but those which he has already discussed in Romans 14.

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<sup>70</sup>Turner, p. 176.

<sup>71</sup>Supra, pp. 44-48.

<sup>72</sup>Infra, Chapter IV.

Furthermore, the writer in using  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  and  $\tau\grave{\alpha}$  in Rom. 16:17 may be employing the anaphoric use of the specific article as described by Robertson,<sup>73</sup> Turner,<sup>74</sup> and by Blass and DeBrunner.<sup>75</sup> This means that if it can be established that the dissensions and scandals described by Paul are already known to the Romans, there is no difficulty in understanding  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  and  $\tau\grave{\alpha}$  as specific articles. Again if Paul has reference to the situation in Romans 14, obviously the dissensions and scandals would indeed be well known to the Romans. The problem was already present among them. Since the divisions and offenses are sufficiently known there is no reason to further describe them in Rom. 16:17.

Therefore this writer suggests that in Rom. 16:17 Paul is not speaking of dissensions and scandals in general, nor does he refer to scandals in the form of false teachings, which are against the teaching the Romans received. Rather the dissensions and scandals are those already known to the Romans. Although Paul's warning may be general in tone, he here warns the Romans against specific men who are causing specific dissensions and scandals.

#### Oi Toutoi

Verse 18 both gives the cause and explanation for the warning in verse 17 in using  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ , and at the same time verse 18 furnishes a more

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<sup>73</sup>Robertson, pp. 755-756.

<sup>74</sup>Turner, p. 173.

<sup>75</sup>Blass and DeBrunner, p. 132.

definite description of the men or type of men described in verse 17 in using  $\acute{\omicron}\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ . Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, after translating the attributive pronoun with "of such a kind as," "such as this," classify  $\acute{\omicron}\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$  in this context as the substantive use of the pronoun with the article. They further state:

of persons  $\acute{\omicron}\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ , [means] such a person; either in such a way that a definite individual with his special characteristics is thought of, or that any bearer of certain definite qualities is meant.<sup>76</sup>

Both Turner<sup>77</sup> and Blass and DeBrunner<sup>78</sup> also note that  $\acute{\omicron}\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is occasionally preceded by the article when referring to individuals or when embracing a class. Thus in verse 18, St. Paul, with the individual errorists still in mind, not only more fully describes them, but he gives a broader characterization of the type of work such men do. The seemingly trite trouble they cause in Rome has broader and deeper implications, and is thus capable of more universal application.

#### Verses 19 and 20

In verses 19 and 20 Paul's thoughts turn from the problem at hand with the errorists to the real object of his concern throughout the Epistle, the Christians in Rome. In speaking more directly to and of the Romans, Paul gives further reasons for the strict warning, he explains how the warning is to be understood, and he gives the Romans the best kind of divine assurance and comfort.

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<sup>76</sup>Bauer, p. 829.

<sup>77</sup>Turner, pp. 193-194.

<sup>78</sup>Blass and DeBrunner, p. 143.



Verse 19 is both an admonition containing a program of counter action against the errorists, and it is a commendation of the exemplary lives the Romans have led. The well known obedience of the saints at Rome stands in bold contrast to the disobedience of the belly servers in verse 18. The ἀπειθείας is reminiscent of the ἠνακῶν of verse 18. Paul explains that the Roman Christians are the target of the concentrated efforts of the errorists because they are innocent and obedient to the Christ. When Paul reminds them to be wise and guileless, he recalls the τρομεῖν of verse 17 and perhaps even the words of our Lord in Matt. 10:16-20. In addition to his remarks in verse 19, Paul has had occasion previously to commend the Romans for their faith and obedience to Christ (Rom 1:8; 15:14). So here he has every reason to believe they will continue.

In verse 20 Paul's admonitions and warnings give way to words of reassurance and comfort as the errorists are called to mind for the last time. The methods and actions employed by the errorists in verse 18 suggest they are Satan sponsored (2 Cor. 11:13-15), and verse 20 seems to confirm that suspicion. While the errorists are dangerous, and can cause great harm, Paul assures the Romans of their own ultimate victory over the evil men. The defeat is described in graphic terms, perhaps recalling Gen. 3:15. As all things are placed in subjection under the feet of Christ (1 Cor. 15:27), so the God of peace will crush Satan under the feet of the Roman Christians.

It is significant that Paul portrays the foil against which the errorists are crushed as the "God of peace." The peace theme, closely related to the concept of unity, runs throughout the Epistle. Paul

begins the letter with a salutation of peace (1:7). For those who do good there is peace (2:10). Since man is justified by faith, he has peace with God (5:1). From the Spirit comes life and peace (8:6). The Kingdom of God involves peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:7). Paul's appeal then at that point is that the Romans live in peace (14:19). In a spirit similar to that of Rom. 16:20, Paul prays that the same God of peace will abide with his hearers (15:33). As Paul warns against those who would destroy the harmony of the Roman congregation, he makes it clear that it is only the God of peace who can bring peace and unity. Only He can restore and maintain peace against Satanic schisms. With this great assurance of victory and peace comes Paul's characteristic benediction.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE IDENTITY OF THE PEOPLE DESCRIBED IN ROMANS 16:17-20

From the information given in the text and from the evidence presented in Chapter III, the following picture of the people described in Rom. 16:17-20 emerges. Paul has a particular group of men in mind. He says that the disturbers are causing and habitually cause divisions. They are creating specific, known death-traps and offenses. Paul objects to their divisive activity because it is contrary to the teaching which the Romans have received. The errorists are not necessarily teachers or proclaimers of false doctrine. Verse 18 gives a more definite and at the same time a generalized characterization of the offenders. Here the errorists are described as serving their stomachs, that is themselves, rather than the Lord Christ. They use devious means, hypocritical smoothness and flattering speech to advance their aims and to deceive the guileless. Verse 20 apparently associates the work of these people with Satan himself, whether or not the people are conscious of such a prominent sponsor. Paul cautions the Romans to watch and avoid such people because they threaten the life and the unity of the church at Rome.

Given this description and the probability that Paul is speaking against a specific group of errorists, many scholars have attempted to identify the disturbers more precisely. The answers that have been given to the question of identity fall into three general categories. A large number of scholars have either asserted that Paul is speaking against a group of Judaizers, or strongly suggest this as a possible and

probable explanation. Chrysostom was perhaps the first who suggested this,<sup>1</sup> and he is supported in his opinion by more contemporary scholars such as Althaus,<sup>2</sup> Godet,<sup>3</sup> Sanday and Headlam,<sup>4</sup> and Kuess.<sup>5</sup> Carl Gaenssle should also be mentioned as one of the most avid and articulate champions of the Judaizer theory.<sup>6</sup> Such New Testament passages as Gal. 1:6-9; 6:11-15; Phil. 3; 2 Cor. 11:1-15 have been used to support this position. Other commentators have suggested that some other extreme group is here described by Paul, such as a pseudo-Christian party, or some gnostic, antinomian, or libertine group. Such scholars as Bruce,<sup>7</sup> Denney,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Chrysostom, The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans, in Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1941), VII, 502.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Althaus, Der Brief an die Roemer, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch (6th revised edition; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1949), VI, 130.

<sup>3</sup>F. Godet, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1883), p. 496.

<sup>4</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary (5th Edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), p. 429.

<sup>5</sup>Otto Kuess, Die Briefe an die Roemer, Korinther und Galater, in Das Neue Testament, edited by A. Wikenhauser and O. Kussel (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1940), VI, 110.

<sup>6</sup>Carl Gaenssle, "What Manner of Men are They? A Study of Rom. 16:17-18" (mimeographed monograph, n.d.), passim.

<sup>7</sup>F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1963), p. 277.

<sup>8</sup>James Denney, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in The Expositor's Greek Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, n.d.), II, 721-722.

Rhys,<sup>9</sup> and Best<sup>10</sup> have advanced such theories using passages like 1 Cor. 1:10,11; 3:1-4,18-20; 11:18-19; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:5 in support of their views. Because of the greater difficulties involved, such theories have not been as popular as those involving the Judaizers. However, neither position is without its problems, and in an effort to come to grips with the problem, a third group of scholars has laid the problem aside as being impossible to solve. They take the position that Paul's description in Rom. 16:17-20 is too general and indefinite to warrant a more precise identification. Such scholars as Stoeckhardt,<sup>11</sup> Dodd,<sup>12</sup> and Knox<sup>13</sup> take this position.

Neither of the first two positions cited above is without serious difficulties. There may be similarities between the men described by Paul in Rom. 16:17-20 and Judaizers as well as other antinomian and gnostic groups, which opposed Paul in other places. However, the description given in Rom. 16:17-20 is so general and the information available on these groups is so limited that a precise identification is virtually impossible. It would appear that the description given by

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<sup>9</sup>Howard Rhys, The Epistle to the Romans (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961), p. 201.

<sup>10</sup>Ernest Best, The Letter of Paul to the Romans (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), p. 176.

<sup>11</sup>G. Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), pp. 641-642.

<sup>12</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, Fontana Books, 1960), p. 244.

<sup>13</sup>John Knox and G. R. Cragg, The Epistle to the Romans, in The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954), IX, 662.

Paul in Rom. 16:17-20 does not exactly fit any of the groups that opposed Paul in other cities.

Furthermore, it would appear that the errorists were already active in Rome. At least they were known to the church there. Since the description is vague, the Roman Christians probably knew the group of which Paul wrote. That means if Paul had one of the above groups in mind, one must assume the Romans knew the Judaizers or antinomians sufficiently well to make the identification. It may be that the Roman Christians had heard of Judaizers and other groups that opposed Paul in his journeys. However, one cannot assume that their information was such as to be able to identify one particular group of errorists from the general warning given, unless it was a group well known and already at work in their midst. Rather it would appear that if Paul had one of these groups in mind, he would have mentioned it by name, or he would have given a more detailed description. In that way they could be properly identified upon their arrival. Therefore it would appear that since the warning is general, the group was so known to the Romans that a few words would be adequate to alert the readers to who they were.

The solution to the problem may not be so difficult as it appears at first. Since Paul does speak of a specific group of men in Rom. 16:17-20 who were known to and active in the Roman congregation, an obvious place to seek additional information about them would be elsewhere in the epistle to the Romans. In surveying the letter, one is struck with certain strong similarities between the situation described in chapters 14, 15 and Rom. 16:17-20.

According to chapter 14 the problem already present in Rome was a conflict between certain weak or novice members of the community and between a group of strong, veteran members. The weak refrained from eating certain foods, and esteemed one day above another (14:2,5,21). For them to eat such foods, possibly the meat offered to pagan idols, constituted a sin; it was damaging to their faith. On the other hand there were those, more deeply grounded in the Christian faith, who, fully cognizant of their Christian freedom, were eating the same foods and perhaps even disregarding the customs pertaining to the certain days. The result was a division in the congregation. Through the offense created by the strong the weak were falling from Christ. From the description given, it would appear that the problem was in its early stages. Though already present the greater danger lay in what could happen rather than what had already occurred.

In Rom. 16:17 Paul describes the errorists as causing divisions and dissensions. In Romans 14 Paul addresses the strong members of the congregation and accuses them of dividing the congregation by their loveless acts of eating offensive foods, Paul cautions both groups against quarrels and disputes (14:1). Though each group may have been guilty of judging the other, the chief responsibility lies with the strong (14:3,10). Paul's exhortation for peace, harmony, and brotherly concern indicates that the strong had already manifested the opposite traits toward their weaker brethren (14:17-20).

Another link between the two passages centers in the terms *σκαύδαλον*, *προσημίαι*, and *σκανδαλίζω*. In Rom. 16:17 Paul describes the errorists as causers of *σκαύδαλα*. In Romans 14,

Paul warns the strong against a similar practice. The strong were placing stumbling blocks, *προσκόμματα*, and traps, *σκηνόματα*, in the way of the weaker brethren by insisting on their freedom to eat any food (Rom. 14:13,20). He uses *ἐκτινακτέω* in Rom. 14:21 in a similar way. The element of destruction in *ἐκτινακτέον* further shows itself in *ἀπόλλυε* in 14:15, where the weak are being destroyed by the strong. It is also significant that the only independent use of these terms in Romans occurs in these two passages.

Paul further describes the errorists as men who serve their belly in verse 18. Although the term *κοιλία* is not used in Romans 14, the same characteristics manifest themselves in both groups. "Belly servers" is a fit description for people to whom Paul addresses himself with these words:

"Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died . . . . For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit . . . . Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God."  
(Rom. 14:15,17,20)

Upon close examination still other terms occur in both passages in seemingly related situations. The expression "serving Christ" occurs in both passages (14:18; 16:18), pointing to a contrast between Christ and the group mentioned. The strong in Romans 14 are more interested in the satisfaction of their own desires than they are in the welfare of the brother or in the harmony of the community. The same may be said of the men described in Romans 16. Similarly the *ὁ . . . ἀλλά* construction occurs in both places (Rom. 14:17; 16:18). Although it may be of minor importance the words *ἀδελφός* (Rom. 16:17; 14:10,13,15,21) and *εἰρήνη* (Rom. 16:20; 14:17,19) also occur in both passages.



In Rom. 16:18 Paul further describes the action of the errorists as being subtle and deceptive. There is no direct parallel for this trait elsewhere. At the same time a close correlation in these two traits need not be present to establish a relationship between the two texts in question. In addition it is to be noted that verse 18 is also a generalized characterization of the type of men who cause dissensions and scandals. That is, it is such kinds of men as a group or genus, not necessarily these specific errorists, use fine words and flattery. One therefore need not expect a manifestation of the specific practice in a particular group. It is of course possible that the strong Christians in Romans 14 did use deceptive speech in defending their practices. The fact that Satan was behind their faith destroying activity toward the weak would make it deceptive, whether or not the strong knew the significance of their activity. Thus Paul's words of warning are valuable in pointing out the true nature of their acts.

In addition to the close correspondence between the two passages in details, the general intent of both is much the same. Paul's overarching concern is that the harmony, unity, and peace of the congregation at Rome be preserved. This is one reason at least for the warning and drastic action recommended in Rom. 16:17-20; and it is Paul's purpose in pointing out the nature of the seemingly minor misdemeanor of the strong Christians in Romans 14. Paul speaks of the unity of the body of Christ in Rom. 14:7-9. Paul's appeal to the strong is to "pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom. 14:19). On a person-to-person level, Paul's directive is to upbuild the neighbor (15:1-2). Paul's concern for mutual love and peace finds further expression in Rom. 15:5-13.

The unity of the congregation is at stake in Romans 16. So it is understandable that Paul speaks of the things that make for peace, and that he commends the faith and obedience of the Romans in both texts (Rom. 15:14; 16:19).

On the basis of the various parallels here cited, it may be surmised that the errorists described by Paul in Romans 16 and the strong Christians being censured in Romans 14 and 15 are one and the same group. It is true that Paul's warning is general in nature, but there is little doubt that he speaks to a specific situation. Sufficient reason for the vagueness of the warning may be found in the fact that Paul may have been a stranger to the congregation. The disturbers that Paul condemns in Romans 16 are the strong Christians he admonishes in Romans 14. Not only is this the simplest and most obvious answer to a perplexing problem, but it is the one that raises the least difficulties.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CONTEXT

The relationship of Rom. 16:17-20 to the remainder of the epistle has raised a number of problems both in establishing and in interpreting the text under study. For this reason a more explicit study of the context of Rom. 16:17-20 becomes necessary. Further, a brief survey of the context will serve to support the interpretation we have given Rom. 16:17-20. When taken to be a warning against those who would destroy the unity of the congregation, Rom. 16:17-20 fits well with the thought of the rest of Romans.

Ideas expressive of the unity of the church are both implicit and explicit throughout the epistle to the Romans. Paul's concern for the unity of the church in Rom. 16:17-20 is directly related to the main theme of the epistle: namely justification by faith. In the epistle as a whole Paul sees the church as the place where the unity of all men in Christ manifests itself in a life of love, harmony, fellowship, and peace. Because of the unity between God and man established in Christ, the same unity must be maintained within the church, if the church and its members are to live and grow. To destroy the unity is to destroy the church; man returns to the old aeon. Unity is one of Paul's major themes throughout Romans, and it is expressed in a vivid and graphic way in Rom. 16:17-20.

The general theme of the epistle is stated in Rom. 1:16-17:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also

to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

Man by nature is estranged from God in ungodliness and wickedness (1:18), and he is incapable of achieving righteousness with God by his own efforts. But in the new aeon established by Jesus Christ the righteousness of God has been revealed and made possible for men (3:21-22). In short Jesus Christ has reunited, he has reconciled man with God. Through faith in Christ man is justified, and he has peace with God (5:1). Paul makes it clear that the gift of righteousness is for all men, Jew and Gentile alike (3:21-29).

The great act of God in uniting all men with God in Christ means that man is free from the wrath of God (chapter 5), from sin (chapter 6), from the Law (chapter 7), and from death (chapter 8). It means that not only is God the Father of all men (4:11,16), but that all who receive the gift of righteousness through faith have a unique and intimate relationship with the full Godhead. For example men have peace with God (5:1). By virtue of his Baptism the Christian is united with Christ in His death and resurrection (6:1-11). Paul speaks of the Christian as living in Christ (8:10). In Christ the bond between God and man is strong and permanent (8:31-39). Likewise man's new relationship with the Holy Spirit is a peculiar and penetrating one. Paul expresses it as one being in the Spirit (8:9) and dwelling in the Spirit (8:11). The Spirit puts words in a man's mouth (8:15-16), He helps in times of weakness (8:26), and the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (8:27). In short because of the gift of faith in Jesus Christ men are no longer

enemies of God, but sons and heirs (8:12-17). All this and more is implied in the assertion that man is justified by faith.

Paul makes repeated mention of the unity Jew and Gentile share in Christ. Gentiles as well as Jews have sinned (3:9). Therefore all are without excuse, and no man can judge another (2:1-3; 14:10-12). The Lord is God of all men on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (3:28-31; 5:18). There is no distinction between Jew and Greek (10:12-13).

What Paul implies in the doctrinal part of his epistle (chapter 1 to 11), he draws out in detail in the practical section (chapter 12 to 15). Because man has been reconciled with God in Christ, Christians are also united with each other. When Paul exhorts the Romans to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (12:1), he not only implies a vertical relationship, but a horizontal one. Thus he states: "We though many are one body in Christ and individual members of one another" (12:5). In that spirit a number of Paul's practical prescriptions are intended to foster fellowship in Christ: "Let love be genuine" (12:9); "Love one another with brotherly affection" (12:10); "Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality" (12:13); "Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited" (12:16); "Live peaceably with all" (12:18); "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God" (12:19); "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law" (13:8); "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (14:19); "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him" (15:2); "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you" (15:7); "I am satisfied about you, my brethren,

that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another" (15:14). The spirit of unity even spills over into the Christian's relationship with governing authorities (chapter 13).

Because unity is important Paul speaks in some detail of the dissension between the weak and strong Christians in chapter 14. Such lovelessness and unconcern for the brother threatens the unity of the church and jeopardises man's relationship with God. The strong and weak are to live together in love. This is not only an act of obedience to Christ, but it is an expression of faith and an act of worship (15:1-13).

Paul's concern for unity continues in Romans 16 where he expresses his personal kinship with the Romans in his greetings (16:1-15). The kiss of peace (16:16) is indicative of the fellowship the Romans have in Christ. The bond of fellowship among all the churches is manifest in the greetings as well.

In addition to the passages already noted, Paul's concern for unity and his fellowship with the Christians at Rome are warmly expressed in Rom. 1:6-7, 11-12; 5:1; 8:37-39; 11:33-36; 15:5-6, 13, 30-33; 16:25-27, and in other Pauline epistles (1 Corinthians 1; 3:23; 2 Cor. 13:11-14; Phil. 1:27-2:4).

Now when Rom. 16:17-20 is interpreted as a warning against people bent on disrupting the unity of the church at Rome, its relationship to the rest of Romans becomes clear. The passage not only fits into Romans, but it becomes a fitting climax and capstone for the entire epistle. It may be true that Paul's dramatic appeal and urgent warning would at first appear as an intrusion into the text. However, the problem is

serious. It requires immediate and drastic action. If the divisive action is not halted at its inception, not only the vitality of the congregation is threatened, but the life of each member hangs in the balance. What has been uppermost in Paul's mind throughout Romans is here expressed in an emotional and personal way. Rom. 16:17-20 is a proper application of Paul's theology of fellowship as outlined in Romans. Paul's words are sharp, but, like a surgeon's knife, they strike at the heart of a spreading cancer. The warning is emotional as one would expect from a man of experience. Yet it is general as one might expect of one who knew the situation only through observers and witnesses.

Robert George Brainer, *A Synoptical Study of Romans 16:17-20*, (Chicago: Northwestern Publishing House, 1941).

In the discussion of each case the reader's attention is given first. The study is then briefly summarized. Then specific points and conclusions are presented on the basis of this writer's interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. Since each case is treated as a whole, only the major points and conclusions are discussed.

W. V. A. Brainer, *op. cit.* (supra), 1941.

Adolph A. Boni, *Christ's Fellowship and Fellowship* (Chicago: Northwestern Publishing House, 1941), pp. 25-26.

David W. Torrance, "Theology," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Chicago: Miller Press, 1951), pp. 33-34.

Harold K. Frankford, *Agapē in Romans 16:17-20*, (supra), pp. 11, 12-13.

Robert George Brainer, *A Synoptical Study of Romans 16:17-20* (Chicago: Northwestern Publishing House, 1941).

## CHAPTER VI

### A SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE OF FIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF ROMANS 16:17-20

When the Missouri Synod's theology of church and prayer fellowship was being reassessed during the 1940's, much attention was given to various interpretations of Rom. 16:17-20. Of the great number of studies of Rom. 16:17-20 which appeared during that time, this writer has selected five significant essays for further study here. The essays selected are: E. W. A. Koehler, Romans 16:17-20,<sup>1</sup> Adolph A. Brux, Christian Prayer-Fellowship and Unionism,<sup>2</sup> "Thesis V" of A Statement,<sup>3</sup> Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff.,<sup>4</sup> and Robert George Hoerber, A Grammatical Study of Romans 16, 17.<sup>5</sup> In the discussion of each essay the reasons for its inclusion are given first. The essay is then briefly summarized. Then specific points and conclusions are evaluated on the basis of this writer's interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. Since each essay is treated as a whole, only the major points and conclusions are discussed.

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<sup>1</sup>E. W. A. Koehler, Romans 16:17-20 (n.p., 1946).

<sup>2</sup>Adolph A. Brux, Christian Prayer-Fellowship and Unionism (Racine, Wisconsin: n.p., 1935), pp. 10-24.

<sup>3</sup>[Oswald W. Hoffmann], "Thesis V," in Speaking the Truth in Love (Chicago: Willow Press, [1946]), pp. 35-44.

<sup>4</sup>[Martin F. Franzmann], Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff. (n.p., May 11, 1950).

<sup>5</sup>Robert George Hoerber, A Grammatical Study of Romans 16, 17 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, n.d.).



E. W. A. Koehler, Romans 16:17-20

E. W. A. Koehler's monograph on Rom. 16:17-20 is included in this study because it appeared at the height of the controversy of the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 in 1946, and because it is a good example of the so-called "traditional" interpretation of the passage. Koehler's essay is best understood as a serious attempt to defend the "traditional" interpretation of the passage against the interpretations of Adolph A. Brux,<sup>6</sup> Michael Reu,<sup>7</sup> "Thesis V" of A Statement,<sup>8</sup> and that of Theodore Graebner.<sup>9</sup> As such Koehler's study does not appear to be an exegetical study of Rom. 16:17-20 as much as a systematic treatment of the passage. The author appears to be more concerned with the practical and doctrinal implications of the passage than with its proper interpretation. The substance of Koehler's position is best understood in his own words:

The text is plain, and it requires no great erudition to understand its meaning. Paul tells us to mark those who, by teaching what is not in agreement with the doctrines of the Bible, are causing divisions and offenses in the Church, and such people we are to avoid, because in doing what they do they are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but themselves, and are deceiving the simple. The simple, who are not well grounded in the doctrines of the Bible, can, indeed, easily be deceived by such people, while those who know the teachings of the Bible can easily mark and recognize these men by comparing their teaching with the teaching of the Bible, and will, therefore, avoid them.

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<sup>6</sup>Brux, pp. 10-24.

<sup>7</sup>Michael Reu, In the Interest of Lutheran Unity (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1940).

<sup>8</sup>[Hoffmann], p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Theodore Graebner, Prayer Fellowship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 4-10.

That is the way our fathers have understood the text;  
that is the way we till now understood it. But presently  
a new interpretation has been put forth.<sup>10</sup>

The fundamental difference between Koehler's interpretation and that of this writer is his understanding of the prepositional phrase, *παρά τὴν ἁγορὴν* as an adjectival phrase modifying *τῶν διχοστασιῶν καὶ τῶν ἁγῶν*. Though many other conclusions stated in the essay are substantially correct, much of what Koehler says is colored by his interpretation of the *παρά* phrase. Koehler offers little real support when he states his position on *παρά* as follows:

The first and natural connection of the phrase "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned" is with the preceding words "divisions and offenses," and not with the following word "poiountas." If Paul had wished to say that it is contrary to his teaching to cause any kind of division and offense, then we should expect the phrase to follow the word "poiountas," as we have it in Rom. 1:17, where the phrase "ek pisteos eis pistin" follows the verb. In our text, however, the words "divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine, etc." are placed between the article "tous" and the participle "poiountas," and therefore the phrase "contrary to the doctrine, etc." must be connected with "divisions and offenses." What Paul has in mind are divisions and offenses that run contrary to the doctrine, even as he told the elders at Miletus that from among them shall men arise "speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them," Acts 20:30.<sup>11</sup>

Koehler may be correct in stating that such a construction is a general rule; however, in light of evidence cited elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> the argument from word order alone is inconclusive. The *παρά* phrase is best understood as adverbial, not adjectival.

<sup>10</sup>Koehler, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Supra, Chapter III, pp. 44-48.

Koehler's understanding of the meanings of words in Rom. 16:17-20 is generally acceptable, especially the inclusive connotation he gives *διωκῆναι*.<sup>13</sup> However, Koehler's understanding of *κοιλία* as innermost heart of man lacks support. In using Job 15:35 and John 7:38 as parallels, he states:

That means they are not drawing these erroneous teachings from the words of Christ, but out of their own mind; they are not teaching what Christ has commanded, but what they have themselves devised; not Christ, but their own "koilia" is the master whom they obey in teaching these errors.<sup>14</sup>

Further he says:

We maintain 1) that according to Scriptural usage the word "koilia" can be understood to designate the mental faculties of man, his mind and heart; 2) that it is Scriptural to say and teach that false doctrines do not stem from the words of Christ, and are not taught in obedience to Christ, but that they proceed from the errorist's own mind and heart; 3) that the explanation here offered fits far better into the line of thought expressed in the text than any other.<sup>15</sup>

As has been previously shown, the meaning innermost heart or mind of man is suspect because nowhere in the New Testament is it clearly used in this way. The simple, literal meaning of "belly" fits the text and context better than any other.<sup>16</sup>

Although Koehler's understanding of verse 18 is somewhat influenced and obscured by his interpretation of the *μυοει* phrase in verse 17, his emphasis on the relationship between verses 17 and 18 is helpful.

Against those who use verse 18 to brand the errorists as personal enemies

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<sup>13</sup>Koehler, pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Supra, Chapter III, pp. 36-40.

of Christ, such as heathen or Judaizers, Koehler states:

The connective between the verses is "gar," "for," which introduces the reasons why such men as mentioned in v. 17 are to be avoided, and not the marks by which they are to be identified . . . .  
 In v. 18 we have, indeed, a characterization of these men, but it is not one by which we are to determine which of these divisionmakers we are to avoid, but a characterization which shows why we should avoid them.<sup>17</sup>

Further:

What Paul means to say is simply this: Every errorist uses good words and plausible arguments to prove his point, and to convince others. Whether or not he intends to deceive is not the question, the fact is that he does deceive, and for this reason we should avoid him.<sup>18</sup>

In addition it should be noted that verse 18 not only gives the reasons why the errorists should be avoided, but is helpful in determining who they were.

In summary it should be said, that while Koehler's exegesis may be faulty and his conclusions invalid on specific points, his was an honest attempt to deal with the problem of fellowship in the Lutheran Church. The essay concludes expressing healthy evangelical Lutheran concerns.<sup>19</sup>

#### Adolph A. Brux, "Romans 16,17"

Adolph A. Brux was one of the first Missouri Synod clergymen to question the Missouri Synod's position on church and prayer fellowship

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<sup>17</sup>Koehler, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

with other Christians during the 1920's and 1930's. Because his views were at variance with the Missouri Synod position, and because his ideas drew much attention and were well circulated, he probably more than any one person initiated a movement that has culminated in the Missouri Synod's present theology of church fellowship.

Adolph A. Brux's study of Rom. 16:17 is contained in his monograph, Christian Prayer-Fellowship and Unionism.<sup>20</sup> The monograph is Brux's personal defense of his practice of praying and fellowshiping with other Christians. The study is intended to be a critical investigation of the Missouri Synod's position with respect to prayer fellowship with Christians of other denominations. Many of his ideas have now been found acceptable. However, at the time the difference was so great that Brux was recalled from his position in India. Thereupon he resigned from the Missouri Synod.

Brux's monograph is arranged in three parts of which part one contains both an examination of the Scriptural basis for prayer fellowship with other Christians and the author's study of Rom. 16:17. At the outset, after carefully outlining the synodical position on prayer fellowship, Brux states:

our position on prayer-fellowship is not based on statements in the Bible which expressly and unequivocally prohibit prayer-fellowship with Christians who stand with us on the same foundation, Christ, yet differ from us in some points of doctrine, but is based on logical deductions from Scripture passages which expressly speak of false prophets, apostates, errorists, deceivers, false doctrine, etc., and on logical deductions from prayer and prayer-fellowship as viewed by us. Likewise, reference to the

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<sup>20</sup>Brux, "Romans 16,17," in Christian Prayer-Fellowship and Unionism.

passages in our Confessional Writings shows that these, too, do not speak of prayer-fellowship with Christians of other denominations . . . . Our position on prayer-fellowship with Christians of other denominations has, therefore, been arrived at by a process of logical reasoning and deduction from the Scriptures and the Confessional Writings, and is not based on express prohibitions of prayer-fellowship either in the Scriptures or in the Confessional Writings.<sup>21</sup>

After listing the passages which he is about to study that touch on prayer fellowship including Rom. 16:17-20, Brux further outlines his purpose as follows:

Our Synodical position is based on the assumption that all of the passages in the preceding two lists are applicable to Christians of other denominations who differ from us in some point of doctrine or practice, and that they forbid any kind of religious fellowship with them. However, careful study of these passages indicates: 1) that the passages listed in group I . . . . refer to persons who either never were Christians, or, having been believers, have suffered shipwreck in the faith and, therefore, can no longer be called Christians, so that we cannot justly and fairly apply these passages to people concerning whom we have every reason to assume that they are true Christians and fellow-members with us of the body of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

In his concluding summary Brux then states:

That there is, therefore, not one Bible passage to uphold Synod's negative position, and that the claim that the Scriptures forbid prayer-fellowship with Christians of other denominations thus falls to the ground.<sup>23</sup>

Within this general framework Brux approaches his study of Rom. 16:17. He summarizes his study in these words:

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

This passage has always been our chief proof-text for supporting our position on prayer-fellowship with Christians of other synods or of other denominations. But when used as such, it has always been divorced from v. 18 . . . . As a result, there has grown up among us an understanding of the passage, and a concomitant application of it, which are not warranted by the context, but rather violate it. For it is plain from v. 18 that the causers of divisions and offenses referred to in v. 17 are not regarded by Paul as Christians at all, and that the reason given for the admonition to avoid is their decidedly dishonest and anti-Christian character.<sup>24</sup>

Further:

Clearly, there is no escape from the conclusion that in Rom. 16:17, 18 Paul is referring to particular persons guilty of particular false doctrine and deceitful activity, and that he does not regard them as Christians, but as antichrists who are endeavoring to undermine and to overthrow the fundamental Christian message.<sup>25</sup>

With this basic understanding of the passage Brux then applies the passage as follows:

The above reference to the context is in itself sufficient to show that our current understanding of v. 17, as referring to every and any minute deviation in Christian doctrine on the part of erring Christians, who stand on the same foundation, Christ, with us and are fellow-members of the body of Christ, but who differ from us in some points of doctrine or practice which do not overthrow the foundation, and as enjoining us to avoid such, is not warranted by the context, but is in violation of it.<sup>26</sup>

Further:

In view of this, can we, with any show of right and justice, apply Rom. 16,17,18 to the Lutheran bodies which are not affiliated with us, or to other Christian denominations who stand on the same foundation, Christ, with us, but differ in some doctrines that do not overthrow the foundation?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

Given this summary of Brux's study, this writer would endorse his general conclusions and applications of Rom. 16:17. However this writer must take exception to Brux's basic premise that the people whom the Romans were to avoid were un-Christian Judaizers whom Paul had met in the past. This conclusion appears to be more a basic assumption from which Brux proceeds than it is a conclusion based on the exegesis of the passage itself. This detracts from an otherwise objective and scholarly exegesis of the passage. The evidence Brux gives for his understanding simply does not bear the weight he places upon it. Another, better answer to the question of who the division makers were is possible, as this writer has indicated.<sup>28</sup>

Brux's basic assumption that those causing divisions are basically anti-Christian in character, influences and colors his exegesis on a number of details. For example his basic understanding of the word *διχοστασίαις* is correct, but when he ascribes a conscious, insincere, and sinister purpose to those who cause the divisions,<sup>29</sup> he goes beyond the context and proper understanding of the word. Somewhat the same is true in his study of *ἑκείνη*. It is certainly true that the "trap" idea in *ἑκείνη* needs to be emphasized.<sup>30</sup> However, the word need not indicate a purposeful, calculated and conscious effort to lead the Romans astray. A full study of *ἑκείνη* would suggest that the one

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<sup>28</sup>Supra, Chapter IV.

<sup>29</sup>Brux, pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-15.



setting such traps need not be fully conscious of his action. Further, Brux is correct when he indicates that the term *διδασκί* cannot be extended to include every part of Christian doctrine. However, one would question his use of the word when he states:

the definite article marks the doctrine as well-known. In fact the relative clause adds that it is the doctrine "which ye have learned." At the same time, the definite article contrasts "the doctrine which ye have learned" with the doctrine taught by them who make it their business to create divisions and to set traps . . . and it will follow that "the doctrine which ye have learned" is the apostolic doctrine that forms the counterpart to the doctrine of the Judaizers.<sup>31</sup>

Instead of contrasting the teaching the Romans received to that of the Judaizers, a more plausible alternative would be to compare the teachings received with the practice of those who were disrupting the congregation in Romans 14. Again in commenting on the word *ἐκκληύετε*

Brux is once again influenced by his basic assumption:

they are not weak and erring Christians, but are antichrists, determined to undermine and subvert Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. If Paul had had in mind persons whom he still regarded as Christians, he would have pointed out the duty of brotherly admonition before enjoining the breaking off of all religious fellowship as he does in Tit. 3,10.11 and 1 Tim. 1,3, also 1 Tim. 6,2.3. But the text contains no suggestion of brotherly admonition. On the contrary, all terms of the text used in reference to these persons indicate either that they never were Christians, or, if they were, are such no longer . . .<sup>32</sup>

One more example of how Brux's basic assumption influences his understanding of the passage is his study of the articles in verse 17. Brux correctly takes the articles, *σοῦς*, *τοῦς*, *ταῦ*, and *την* as specific uses of the definite article as opposed to the general

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

or generic sense. However, this writer must again take issue when Brux lists the distinguishing marks of *τοὺς ποιοῦντας* as:

- 1) They are the particular group of adversaries whom Paul had encountered elsewhere, whom he now has in mind, and who, in a general way at least, were well known to the Roman congregation. <sup>33</sup>

He describes the distinguishing marks of "the" divisions and "the" offenses in this way:

- 1) They are the particular divisions and offenses (traps) which had been created elsewhere in Paul's congregations, which Paul now has in mind . . . .
- 2) They are such as are "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned."
- 3) They are of such a kind that they who cause them cannot be regarded as Christians. <sup>34</sup>

Such conclusions are based more on conjecture than on the facts in the text itself. A proper study of the text and context would indicate that the people described in chapter 14 might be an alternate and perhaps more acceptable answer.

#### Essay Accompanying "Thesis V" of A Statement

An interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 which has much in common with that of Adolph Brux is that of an essay accompanying "Thesis V" of A Statement in Speaking the Truth in Love.<sup>35</sup> The importance of the essay lies both in its unique interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 and in the impact and influence the essay and A Statement as a whole had

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>35</sup>[Hoffmann], pp. 35-44.

upon the theology of fellowship in the Missouri Synod after its publication.

The essay was written both as a defense of and an explanation for "Thesis V" of A Statement. "Thesis V" states in part:

We affirm our conviction that sound exegetical procedure is the basis for sound Lutheran theology.

We therefore deplore the fact that Romans 16:17,18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. It is our conviction, based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church in America.<sup>36</sup>

In further clarifying this "Thesis V," the essay itself includes in this way:

The application of the passage requires that we do not give it a narrower or a broader meaning than it originally had in the situation for which it was intended. We cannot, therefore, apply the passage indiscriminately to the situation within the Lutheran Church today. There may be those in other Lutheran bodies, and in ours, to whom it applies. If there are such, I am not personally acquainted with them, for they are not Christians, but belly servers, intent on fomenting strife in order that they may be able to indulge in good living; people for whom the Gospel ministry is a means of gain . . . .<sup>37</sup>

In the absence of a summary statement in the essay itself, perhaps this explanation from the Foreword of Speaking the Truth in Love will serve that purpose:

In oral and written comments on the Statement we have also noted some misunderstanding of Thesis V concerning the proper interpretation of Romans 16:17,18. The thesis should be read for what it says. It should be noted that no definite exegesis of Romans 16:17,18 is attempted. The proposition merely says that in the view of the signers the passage does not apply to every Christian who differs with us in points of doctrine. Furthermore, it voices the conviction, if we may paraphrase the words, that the official

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

position of the Lutheran bodies in our country who differ from the Synodical Conference is not such that Romans 16:17,18 can be quoted against them. It should also be noted that the elimination of Romans 16:17,18 from the consideration of the problem of Lutheran unity does not imply that there are not other texts which must be used when the difficult and complex questions of fellowship are being considered.<sup>38</sup>

Rather than a thorough exegesis of Rom. 16:17,18, the essay is a brief study composed of materials designed to assist the individual in a study of the passage. While the author of the essay offers his interpretation of Rom. 16:17,18, his views are not so rigid as to rule out alternate interpretations. His conclusions are preliminary and more in the form of suggestions.

While one may question a few minor points, there is much to be said on behalf of the essay. No doubt its chief value is its interpretation of the definite articles in Rom. 16:17, and its interpretation of the  $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$  propositional phrase. Contrary to most interpreters, and particularly those of the Missouri Synod, the essay takes the  $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$  phrase as an adverbial prepositional phrase modifying  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \pi\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma$ . The arguments adduced suggest the real possibility and probability that it is indeed an adverbial and not an adjectival phrase. The difference implies more than a shift in emphasis. If the phrase is adverbial, it puts the emphasis on the divisive action of the men described by Paul, rather than on any false doctrine they may be perpetrating. For that reason the passage cannot be applied indiscriminately to the situation with the Lutheran Church in 1945 or at any time.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

When the essay attempts to identify the men described by Paul this writer must enter a demurrer. The essay identifies the men in this way:

No doubt, Paul has these same people in mind in the letter to the Philippians, sent four or five years later from Rome (or, possibly, even a few months before from Ephesus). Phil. 3:18-21: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>39</sup>

As this writer has shown, the term *κόσμος* is not enough to link the men described by Paul in Rom. 16:17-20 with those in Philippians.

Rather he apparently is speaking of the men described in Romans 14.<sup>40</sup>

The spirit of the essay is in the last analysis positive, wholesome and evangelical. Throughout it is concerned that sound hermeneutical principles be used. Its concern is that the Missouri Synod remain an evangelical church body in the face of tendencies toward legalism and a mechanical use of Scripture. The fact that it helped achieve this goal attests to its worth.

Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff.

When the publication of A Statement caused a storm of controversy in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod with particular reference to Rom. 16:17-20, the Centennial Convention of the Synod meeting in 1947 directed its President, Dr. J. W. Behnken, to submit to pastors and congregations material for the Scriptural study of the questions at

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Supra, Chapter IV.

issue.<sup>41</sup> President Behnken in response to that resolution published and distributed a study document called, Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff., attached to a letter dated May 11, 1950.<sup>42</sup> In his letter introducing the essay President Behnken stresses the function of the essay as a study document:

Kindly note also that the resolution states: "for the Scriptural study of the questions at issue." Let us approach the study with the definite question in mind, What does God teach in this passage? Scripture must decide.<sup>43</sup>

The significance of the essay lies in the fact that being published in the name of the President of the Synod it gave the impression of being a quasi-official interpretation of Rom. 16:17. Furthermore, the essay is a concise and scholarly statement of the traditional interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 that had been tempered by the debates and discussions on the passage. The essay appeared in 1950 after much of the controversy had run its course.

The author of the essay addresses himself to the basic question, "Who or what kind of men were the division-makers or the causers of offense that Paul has in mind in the passage?" A second concern, that of application, is also mentioned in the author's conclusions:

Our findings suggest that the interpretation traditional in our circles is essentially sound. It is not the exegete's business, strictly speaking, to go beyond the interpretation of the text itself to its application; but he may with propriety remind the Church (1) that Rom. 16:17ff. is not the whole of New Testament teaching on error and errorists and that the whole of that

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<sup>41</sup>Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings (1947), p. 423.

<sup>42</sup>[Franzmann], pp. 1-18.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

teaching should be brought to bear on any given situation; (2) that the traditional interpretation, which our study has confirmed, does not, by any means, mean an easy way out for the Church; the warning both in its breadth and its severity lays upon the Church a solemn obligation which can be met only by long, intensive, and loving theological work--the Church should not be startled to find that the decision on error is not always easy or the question of fellowship always simple; and (3) that the passage is to be applied to ourselves, too, in constant self-scrutiny and self-judgment--a Church that complacently deems itself above the possibility of belly service is already dangerously close to serving its belly.<sup>44</sup>

In treating Rom. 16:17, the author addresses himself to the question "Is the warning (verse 17) directed against specific errorists, already present in Rome and well known to the Roman church, or is the warning general?"<sup>45</sup> His conclusion, based primarily on his understanding of the *πάρα* as an adjectival phrase rather than adverbial is that the warning is general and inclusive.<sup>46</sup> This implies that the errorists are not from the Roman congregation but are probably the kind of people Paul has met in the past: namely, Judaizers. In contrast to this view this writer has shown that the warning is general precisely because the errorists were already present. As such they are known and need no further identification.<sup>47</sup>

In further support of his position the author of the essay understands the function and meaning of verse 18 in this way:

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>47</sup>Supra, Chapter IV.

In form the sentence is a causal clause and gives the grounds for the warning; it is not a continuation of the identification that is contained in the warning.<sup>48</sup>

Further:

The verse is designed, then, not to identify the errorists further, but to justify the strength and peremptoriness of the warning and command.<sup>49</sup>

It may be true that *γάρ* at the beginning of verse 18 indicates this is indeed a causal clause, indicating the reasons why the men should be avoided. However, this does not rule out the possibility that Paul may here be also further identifying the men he describes in verse 17. This is particularly true with regard to the term *κοιλία*, which the author of the essay understands in the sense of "gluttony" or "sensuality." When *κοιλία* is understood in its simple, natural sense, it can be taken as a mark of identification of the errorists, particularly in light of Romans 14.<sup>50</sup>

The author of the essay attempts to further substantiate his "traditional" interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 by discussing the wider context of the warning. The author makes reference to Paul's previous experience with false teachers. However, he makes little mention of the context of the passage in Romans.<sup>51</sup> In contrast this writer has shown that when Rom. 16:17-20 is placed into its context in Romans, it tends

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<sup>48</sup>[Hoffmann], pp. 9-10.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>50</sup>Supra, Chapter III, pp. 36-40; Chapter IV.

<sup>51</sup>[Franzmann], p. 18.



to negate the "traditional" interpretation, and support the interpretation of this writer.<sup>52</sup>

It is significant that the essay, written after the storm of controversy had passed, expresses the concerns of the signers of A Statement with regard to the passage's use and application.<sup>53</sup> This indicates that a change was taking place.

Robert G. Hoerber, A Grammatical Study of Romans 16, 17

Robert G. Hoerber's monograph, A Grammatical Study of Romans 16, 17, is included in this study, not so much for its historical importance, but because it is a serious, scholarly, and objective study of Rom. 16:17. Furthermore, it raises questions concerning this writer's own interpretation of Rom. 16:17.

Hoerber outlines the purpose of his grammatical study in these words:

The purpose of this study is not to reiterate what already correctly appears in print, but to clarify certain points of grammar which have been misconceived, incorrectly applied, and naturally have led to serious disagreement.<sup>54</sup>

After doing an admirable job of fulfilling that purpose, Hoerber concludes his study with these words:

In conclusion, then, this grammatical study, which was begun and carried on without any premeditated goal and with a sincere attempt for scholarly impartiality, substantiates "the fathers'" interpretation of Romans 16, 17. The specific use of the definite articles before the substantives divisions, offenses,

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<sup>52</sup> Supra, Chapter V.

<sup>53</sup> [Franzmann], p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Hoerber, p. 32.

and doctrine do not imply particular divisions and offenses in the sense of well-known and obvious, or a particular phase of doctrine. The articles  $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  and  $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}$ , taken as specific articles, link their respective nouns to the phrase  $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\ \tau\acute{\eta}\nu\ \delta\epsilon\delta\alpha\chi\eta\acute{\nu}$  and mean "the divisions and the offenses contrary to the doctrine." The specific article  $\tau\acute{\eta}\nu$  merely connects the noun  $\delta\epsilon\delta\alpha\chi\eta\acute{\nu}$  with the relative clause  $\tau\acute{\eta}\nu\ \upsilon\mu\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \epsilon\acute{\mu}\alpha\tau\epsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\varsigma$ , limiting the thought to "the doctrine which you learned." St. Paul is admonishing the Christians at Rome to avoid, not all who cause divisions and offenses, but those who cause the divisions and offenses contrary to the teaching--not contrary to any teaching, but to the teaching which they learned from him and the other apostles.<sup>55</sup>

Hoerber's study centers on the grammatical classification of the  $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha$  prepositional phrase and of the articles  $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  and  $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}$ .

He lists the four mathematical possibilities as follows:

	Prepositional phrase ( $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\ \tau\acute{\eta}\nu\ \delta\epsilon\delta\alpha\chi\eta\acute{\nu}$ )	The articles ( $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma, \epsilon\acute{\alpha}$ )
1.	Adjectival	Generic
2.	Adjectival	Specific
3.	Adverbial	Generic
4.	Adverbial	Specific <sup>56</sup>

After listing the difficulties, and in some instances the impossibilities of the first, third, and fourth alternatives above, Hoerber makes a good case for the second.

Since this writer has adopted the fourth alternative above in his study of Rom. 16:17, further comment on Hoerber's objections to this possibility becomes necessary. Hoerber's basic argument against taking the prepositional phrase as adverbial and the articles as specific is:

Just as, however, the first combination is not possible on a grammatical basis, so the fourth combination is very odd and difficult to accept on the basis of context. It is, to be sure, grammatically possible to have in a sentence an adverbial

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

prepositional phrase plus specific articles and substantives; but one would then expect either the same sentence or the immediate context to make clear to what the specific article is referring. In Romans 16,17 the articles are left hanging in mid-air if they are taken as specific and the prepositional phrase is adverbial. There is nothing in this sentence or in the context to which they could refer, if the prepositional phrase were adverbial.<sup>57</sup>

While the immediate context may not fully clarify "the dissensions" and "the scandals," the wider context, particularly in Romans 14, certainly does, as this writer has attempted to show.<sup>58</sup> The scandals and dissensions are well known to the Romans, and specific, because those causing them were present in their midst. Hoerber presents impressive arguments for the second possibility above, but on the basis of context, not only is the fourth alternative a possibility, it is the more preferable way of classifying the prepositional phrase and the articles involved. At the same time, it should be pointed out that both classifications are grammatically possible.

Finally, any discussion of Hoerber's monograph would be incomplete without mentioning the fact that the monograph clarifies the grammatical problems in Rom. 16:17, and it clears up a number of misconceptions concerning the passage.

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>58</sup>Supra, Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been an attempt to answer the question, what does Rom. 16:17-20 mean for the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod today? Our interest in Rom. 16:17-20 stems from the history of the interpretation and use of the passage within the Missouri Synod particularly in the last thirty years. The study is designed to be an objective interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20, taking into consideration the way the passage has been used in the Missouri Synod in the last thirty years with regard to the question of church union and fellowship. Hopefully the study can provide a basis for the understanding and use of Rom. 16:17-20 in contemporary discussions on church fellowship in the Lutheran Church in the United States.

Our procedure in conducting the study has been as follows. In light of a brief historical summary of Rom. 16:17-20, we have given our interpretation of the passage. Commonly accepted exegetical methods and tools were used throughout. Some of the problems of integrity and authenticity have been summarized in so far as they directly relate to our interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20. Attention has also been given to the wider context of the passage in Romans. An attempt has also been made to identify the people described by Paul in Rom. 16:17-20. The study concludes with a summary and critique of several interpretations that have been given the passage in the last thirty years. This has provided a sounding board for our

interpretation. The summary and conclusion has been divided into two parts as follows.

#### On the Interpretation of Romans 16:17-20

1. St. Paul's cardinal concern throughout Romans is that the unity and peace of the congregation at Rome be preserved and extended. Indeed the theme of unity is a direct and necessary corollary of the main theme of Romans: justification by faith. If one is justified by faith he has peace with God (Rom. 5:1). In a practical way this means that the individual Christian has a relationship of peace and love with his brother in the Spirit of Christ (Romans 12-16). Paul's feeling for fellowship expresses itself in Romans 16 in his greetings to the saints, his mention of the holy kiss and in his closing remarks (Rom. 16:25-27).

2. Within this general context Paul's primary interest in Rom. 16:17-20 is also that the unity of the congregation at Rome be preserved. This is discernible from the first phrase, παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, to his mention of the God of peace in verse 20.

3. Rom. 16:17-20 is a warning intended for the Roman congregation against a group of people who were disturbing and dividing the congregation. Paul's purpose is to alert the congregation to a real danger and to stem the divisive activity. On the basis of past experience Paul can perhaps more readily see the potential danger of these people than can the members of the congregation at Rome.

4. Specifically, Paul's objection is against the action of those who are disturbing the Roman congregation. The activity is divisive,

and it is this that is against the teaching they have received. The teaching of the disturbers, whether false or true, is of secondary importance. (This conclusion rests on the interpretation of the *περὶ* prepositional phrase as an adverbial phrase modifying *τοὺς ποιοῦντας*, and by taking the articles, *τοὺς*, *τῶν*, *τῶν*, *τῶν* as referring to specific groups.

5. While Paul's warning is expressed negatively, its intent is entirely positive.

6. The terms *δινομεταίτις* and *ἑκείνη* indicate that the difficulties being faced by the Roman congregation are of a rather general nature. Hence they cannot be limited to doctrinal matters or false teachings.

7. Paul recommends that the division-makers be watched in a discerning way, in the spirit of love. They should be avoided only to the extent to which they have turned from the Lord Christ.

8. Paul's description of those in error is general and somewhat ambiguous, making a precise identification difficult. However the nature of the warning would seem to indicate that this group was already active in Rome. Hence the Roman Christians would know to whom Paul was referring.

9. Several parallels between Rom. 16:17-20 and Romans 14 seem to suggest that Paul is speaking of the same group of people in both texts. Both groups are described in remarkably similar terms. Such words as *ἑκείνον*, *ἀδελφός*, *εἰρήνη* occur in both passages. Even the *ὁδὸν . . . ἄλλῃ* construction is repeated. Reference is made in both places to serving Christ. While the word "belly" does not

appear in Romans 14, the problem at issue does center on matter of food.

10. One might therefore describe the division mongers as a group of people who are members of the Roman congregation, and who are giving offense to weaker Christians by their eating habits. By offending the weak they are creating dissensions and divisions. Whether or not they are fully aware of the implications of their deeds, their action is subtle and deceptive.

#### The Passage in the History of the Missouri Synod

1. A brief study of the history of the interpretation and use of Rom. 16:17-20 in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod indicates there have been three generally discernible periods of change. In the first period, from about 1847 to 1900, the passage was understood as a warning against teachers of false doctrine. The passage was applied to various sects, but never against other Lutherans and seldom against other Christian churches. Beginning at about 1900 and extending to 1945 the passage was also interpreted as a warning against teachers of false doctrine, however the passage was repeatedly applied against other Christians, and particularly against such Lutheran Churches as did not completely agree with the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod or with the Synodical Conference. The third chapter in the use of Rom. 16:17-20 began in the 1940's with a spirited controversy over its interpretation and use. The result has been a change both in interpretation and application. Presently Rom. 16:17-20 is being increasingly understood as a warning against those who cause divisions,

and not specifically against teachers of false doctrine. Therefore its application against other Christians who do not fully agree in doctrine with the Missouri Synod is no longer considered to be valid. Thus while the interpretation of the passage has changed, it is currently being used in a way markedly similar to that of the first period of Missouri Synod history. It would appear that the treatment of Rom. 16:17-20 in the Theology of Fellowship closely follows the spirit of its use in the constitution of the Missouri Synod in 1847.

2. A study of various interpretations of Rom. 16:17-20 in the last twenty-five years indicates a close correlation between the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 and the Missouri Synod's theology of fellowship. As the interpretation of Rom. 16:17-20 has changed, so has the Synod's position on church fellowship.

3. A study of past interpretations also indicates that the exegesis of Rom. 16:17-20 has been colored by contemporary concerns, and perhaps also vice versa. Any given exposition seems to reflect the historical context in which the interpreter finds himself. In most cases the commentator appears somewhat prejudiced by his background and situation. This illustrates a basic difficulty of any student of Scripture. Further it points the need to permit any given text to speak for itself.

4. While a number of the exegetes mentioned in this study may have misunderstood and misused the text, one cannot question either their sincerity or their attempt in seeking a valid rendering of Rom. 16:17-20.



5. From a historical perspective, differences in interpretations do not necessarily mean that one is right and another is wrong. It does mean that as the world changes the application of the Word remains relevant.

6. In surveying interpretations of Rom. 16:17-20 during the last twenty-five years, one is not so much impressed with the differences, but with a certain lack of love exhibited in its application. It is ironic that a study of Rom. 16:17-20 should produce the kind of divisions St. Paul sought to avoid in issuing his warning. This should help contemporary Scripture scholars and church leaders to avoid the same kind of pitfall.

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