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# Doctrinal Unity and Church Fellowship

Roland F. Ziegler

Discussions on church fellowship are a perpetual feature of life in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Walther’s *Church and Ministry* contains a lengthy discussion on church fellowship, and papers on church fellowship and communion fellowship have been issued by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) since its foundation in 1962, showing that this is an issue on which the Synod has not come to rest. This study will look at the meaning of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession with some annotations on the nature of doctrine, spelling out some of the consequences of this article for the Lutheran Church today.

## I. The Origin of the Question: Augsburg Confession, Article VII

Though the discussion of doctrinal unity and church fellowship does not constitute a specifically Lutheran doctrine, Lutherans are, nonetheless, especially fixated on this question. There is, after all, no church that does not believe that there has to be at least some agreement on doctrine for fellowship between church to exist. For other churches, questions of church polity play a significant part in their discussions of unity in the church. The most famous example is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of the papacy as serving the unity of the church. Traditional Roman teaching speaks of the unity of the church together with the unity of faith; all members of the church believe what the church tells them to believe. Added to this is the “unity of communion,” namely, “the subjection of the members of the Church to the authority of the bishops and of the pope” and the “participation in the same cult and in the same means of grace.”<sup>1</sup> For still others, liturgical uniformity has been a significant aspect of the unity of the church; one may think of the role the

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1957), 303. Cf. the dogmatic constitution “Pastor aeternus” of Vatican I (DH 3060).

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Roland F. Ziegler is the Robert D. Preus Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Book of Common Prayer has played in the Church of England.<sup>2</sup> Lutherans have neither a church polity that unites them, nor are they united through a uniform liturgy. What keeps them together, according to their self-understanding, is unity in doctrine, and what drives them apart is disunity in doctrine. The origin of this stance, historically, is found in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, "Concerning the Church." The Latin reads in translation:

Likewise, they teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.<sup>3</sup>

The decisive words in the Latin are *pure docetur, recte administrantur*, and the phrase *consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum*.<sup>4</sup> The first question, though, concerns the phrase *doctrina evangelii*. What, exactly, is meant by this term?

## II. The Meaning of *doctrina evangelii*

As a comparison of the German and Latin texts of AC VII reveals, *doctrina* is not simply the modern word "doctrine." Rather, the German has the word for "preaching" in the place of *docere* and *doctrina*. Thus, one school of thought views AC VII to be aiming not at a consensus on certain doctrines but rather at a consensus in the act of preaching. Both teaching and the administration of the sacraments are seen as acts of the church.

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<sup>2</sup> Even though the liturgy is of supreme importance for the Eastern Orthodox Church, there can be a diversity of rites within it, as the example of the Western Rite shows. But there is also opposition to this within Eastern Orthodoxy.

<sup>3</sup> All English translations from the Book of Concord are taken from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); hereafter, Kolb/Wengert.

<sup>4</sup> The German says that it is enough for the true unity of the church that "einträchtiglich nach reinem Verstand das Evangelium gepredigt und die Sakrament dem göttlichen Wort gemäß gereicht werden." *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963). All citations of the Latin or German texts of the Book of Concord are taken from this source. Kolb/Wengert translates: "that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word."

Thus, the question of agreement aims not at a doctrinal statement but at what is going on in the local church.<sup>5</sup> The foundation of the church as church, that is, the preached gospel and the administered sacraments, and the foundation of the unity of the church are the same.<sup>6</sup> This implies that differences in doctrine are no longer church dividing.

This interpretation was put forth already in the nineteenth century by Albrecht Ritschl. Ritschl opposed confessional Lutherans of the nineteenth century who taught that unity in teaching or the Confessions was a prerequisite for church fellowship.<sup>7</sup> For Ritschl, AC VII does not mean that agreement in all the articles of the Augsburg Confession is necessary for the true unity of the church.<sup>8</sup> Ritschl wants to emphasize *doctrina evangelii*, not *doctrina evangelii*. For him, the confession and the word of God are not to be equated. Confession is a human product; the word of God is the power of God. The word of God is not identical with human knowledge of it.<sup>9</sup> The doctrine of the gospel is the human effort to speak the gospel, that is, the divine, gracious will. As such, it is the mark and foundation of the church.<sup>10</sup> Ritschl accused the confessional Lutherans of his time of destroying this distinction between the word of God and confession or doctrine and thereby of propagating an error analogous to the Roman Catholic teaching on grace and freedom. Another consequence of this understanding, according to Ritschl, is that a closed theological system,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Edmund Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*, vol. 8, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1946), 270.

<sup>6</sup> This opinion has been put forth by Karl Barth and many theologians influenced by him. See, e.g., Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1, bk. 2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 2* (Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1938), 859. Other theologians include, e.g., Hans Joachim Iwand. See Eeva Martikainen, *Evangelium als Mitte: Das Verhältnis von Wort und Lehre in der ökumenischen Methode Hans Joachim Iwands* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989), 33–38; Hermann Diem, *Theologie als kirchliche Wissenschaft: Handreichung zur Einübung ihrer Probleme* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1951), 268. See also Hans-Peter Großhans, *Die Kirche: Irdischer Raum der Wahrheit des Evangeliums* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 112.

<sup>7</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, “Die Begründung des Kirchenrechtes im evangelischen Begriff von der Kirche,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Freiburg i.B.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1893), 100–146. For a summary of the view of the Confessions in confessional German theology of the nineteenth century, see Holsten Fagerberg, *Bekenntnis, Kirche und Amt in der deutschen konfessionellen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1952), 135–193.

<sup>8</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, “Die Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Freiburg i.B.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1893), 180.

<sup>9</sup> Ritschl, “Entstehung,” 126.

<sup>10</sup> See Ritschl, “Entstehung,” 177, and Ritschl, “Begründung,” 124–125.

such as in the Formula of Concord, becomes necessary for the church and that for church fellowship there must be agreement in doctrine, not only in the fundamental articles of faith.<sup>11</sup> The source of such an understanding Ritschl finds not in Luther but, rather, in the later Melancthon. The way to the Formula of Concord was therefore paved by Melancthon's theological methodology and ecclesiology as it developed after 1530. A doctrinal understanding of the *doctrina evangelii*, though, is not to be found in AC VII. The list of articles of faith as they were enumerated in the Schwabach Articles, one of the sources of the Augsburg Confession, was not taken over by Melancthon. Rather, AC VII is closer to the Torgau Articles with its focus on the gospel in the narrow sense as an effective means of representing Christ.<sup>12</sup>

It is necessary to revisit this old controversy because Ritschl's position has been prevalent ever since. Karl Barth and his students, especially, have followed a similar argumentation, as did Gustav Aulén.<sup>13</sup> In North America we find it in Gritsch and Jenson's book on Lutheranism, in Gerhard Forde, and in David Truemper, the late professor at Valparaiso.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ritschl, "Begründung," 126–127. Here he names Thomasius as a representative of this view (Thomasius, *Das Bekenntniß der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Consequenz seines Principis*, [Nürnberg: Verlag von August Recknagel, 1848], 43).

<sup>12</sup> Ritschl, "Begründung," 132.

<sup>13</sup> "The unity of the Christian church is not a uniformity in doctrine. The Gospel is the unifying factor for the church, but it is not a finally formulated, doctrinal authority. If a finally and irrevocably fixed system of doctrine were proposed as the basis of unity, it would lead to an intellectualized orthodoxy and a false objectivity. But such false objectivity turns and becomes the exact opposite." Gustaf Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), 341.

<sup>14</sup> Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). Gritsch and Jenson repeatedly proposed that AC VII is referring to the preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments, not to a teaching about the gospel and the sacraments. For them, therefore, the adverbs *pure* and *recte* are tautologies: the gospel is either gospel or not gospel, the sacraments are either sacraments or not sacraments. Melancthon is not defining a consensus that can be quantified. Gritsch and Jenson state, "An ancient misinterpretation of 'the church is . . . where the gospel is purely preached' attends wrongly to these tests, to make it mean 'the church is that ecclesiastical body, or sum of these ecclesiastical bodies, with a right doctrinal position.' There are indeed right doctrinal positions, and they are important in various connections, some of them organizational. But AC 5 [*sic!*] is not at all about the doctrinal status of any organization; it is about what happens or does not happen in some gatherings of people" (132–133). Forde writes: "What the *satis est* calls for is agreement not on a whole list of things or doctrines, but on the specific activity of teaching (preaching) the gospel and administering the sacraments according to that gospel." Gerhard Forde, "The Meaning

The second school of thought on the meaning of AC VII sees the necessity of a doctrinal consensus, not just an agreement in the preaching of the gospel, but restricts it to a consensus on what the gospel (in the narrow sense) and the sacraments are. This is the interpretation and the ecumenical model that was first proposed by some theologians of the Prussian union and much later by the Leuenberg Agreement (1973), by which the churches that subscribed to it entered into full church fellowship.<sup>15</sup> With ninety-four member churches, it is not a minor federation. Two sister churches of the Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Church of Lithuania and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, have signed the Leuenberg Agreement and are member churches of the "Community of Protestant Churches in Europe."<sup>16</sup> The Leuenberg Agreement was also influential in the ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and churches of the Reformed tradition in North America. The Leuenberg Agreement itself does not refer to AC VII, but it takes up the language of "agreement in the right teaching of the Gospel, and in the right administration of the sacraments" which is the "necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the true unity of the church."<sup>17</sup> In a later document by the Leuenberg Fellowship, "The Church of Jesus Christ," published in 1995, the reference to AC VII is made explicit.<sup>18</sup> It is clear from the Leuenberg

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of Satis Est," in *A More Radical Gospel. Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 169. He also writes: "What we are to agree about is the activity of preaching the gospel in its purity and administering the sacraments accordingly as gospel." Gerhard Forde, "Lutheran Ecumenism: With Whom and How Much," *A More Radical Gospel. Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 183.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Julius Müller; cf. Klaus-Martin Beckmann, *Unitas Ecclesiae: Eine systematische Studie zur Theologiegeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1967), 98.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.leuenberg.net/mitgliedskirchen>, accessed January 2, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, "Leuenberg Agreement," §1, in *The Leuenberg Agreement and Lutheran-Reformed Relationships: Evaluations by North American and European Theologians*, ed. William G. Rusch and Daniel F. Martensen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 145.

<sup>18</sup> Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi: Der reformatorische Beitrag zum ökumenischen Dialog über die kirchliche Einheit* [The Church of Jesus Christ: The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity], ed. Wilhelm Hüffmeier, Leuenberger Texte 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 1995), 119. Cf. also the latest document of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, *Schrift, Bekenntnis, Kirche: Ergebnis eines Lehrgesprächs der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa* [Scripture, Confession, Church: Result of a Doctrinal Discussion in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe], ed. Michael Bünker, Leuenberger Texte

Agreement, that “gospel” is here understood in the narrow sense. The later document, “The Church of Jesus Christ,” states that consensus in the gospel consists in the “common expression of the appropriate understanding of the gospel as the message of God’s justifying action in Christ through the Holy Spirit;” and “in the common conviction that the ‘message of justification as the message of God’s free grace is the measure of all the church’s preaching’ (LA 12).”<sup>19</sup>

In North America, we find this interpretation in the ecumenical dialogues of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) that led to the establishment of church fellowship with denominations of the Reformed tradition. The document *A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today*, published in 1993, states:

For Lutherans, the *satis est* of *Augustana* (CA 7) affirms that there is an essential core, a foundational understanding of gospel and sacraments, on which agreement, *consensus*, must be reached for the unity of the church to be discerned in several church bodies. The German form of the article speaks of the “harmonious” (*einträchtig*) preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments. There is no insistence on full agreement in all matters. Rather the *satis est* denies any expansion of the necessary agreement beyond the core, i.e., fundamental truths and institutions of the communion of saints called into existence by the gospel.<sup>20</sup>

A third interpretation of AC VII states that the required consensus consists in “recognizing the Holy Scriptures as the norm and standard of teaching and in regarding the Lutheran Confessions as the correct

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14 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013): “The Leuenberg Agreement declares community between churches of different confessions in the conviction that the diversity of the Reformation confessions does not exclude their common witness to the Gospel, but rather challenges them to common confession. The *one* Gospel can be expressed in different linguistic forms (cf. LA A5). Therefore the Leuenberg Agreement states: ‘In the sense intended in this Agreement, church fellowship means that, on the basis of this consensus they have reached in their understanding of the gospel, churches with different confessional positions accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament and strive for the fullest possible cooperation in witness and service to the world’” (73).

<sup>19</sup> *Die Kirche Jesu Christi*, 120.

<sup>20</sup> *A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today: The Report of the Lutheran-Reformed Committee for Theological Conversations, 1988-1992*, ed. Keith F. Nickle and Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 33.



exposition of the Scriptures—that much and not more.”<sup>21</sup> This means that other questions that are not addressed in the confession should not be divisive. This was the position of the old United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA). The “Washington Declaration” of 1920 states:

In the case of those Church Bodies calling themselves Evangelical Lutheran, and subscribing the Confessions which have always been regarded as the standards of Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, the United Lutheran Church in America recognizes no doctrinal reasons against complete co-operation and organic union with such bodies.<sup>22</sup>

This position was later continued by the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) while, as we stated above, the ELCA has a different ecumenical model.<sup>23</sup>

A fourth understanding of AC VII is that the consensus necessary for the unity of the church consists in everything that the Scriptures teach. Such a position was proposed by Franz Pieper. In his essay “On the Unity of Faith,” delivered to the convention of the Synodical Conference in 1888, Pieper states in Thesis I: “By unity in the faith we understand the agreement in *all* articles of the Christian *doctrine* revealed in Holy Scripture.”<sup>24</sup> In support of this thesis, Pieper quotes not only AC VII, but also Article X of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord (§31). This interpretation has been continued by Robert Preus, Ralph Bohlmann, and Kurt Marquart, who also take FC SD X 31 as a commentary on AC VII. The text of FC SD X

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<sup>21</sup> John H. Tietjen, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity? A History of Efforts to Unite the Lutherans of America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 151.

<sup>22</sup> *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America*, ed. R. C. Wolf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 350.

<sup>23</sup> Edgar M. Carlson, “How the LCA Understands Consensus in the Gospel as the Basis for Fellowship,” in *The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church, [Summary Report]:[from an Official Study Conducted by the Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the USA during 1972-77]* (New York: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1978), 30. In the twentieth century, this position was also endorsed by Hermann Sasse in 1952. See Hermann Sasse, “Über die Einheit der Lutherischen Kirche,” in *In Statu Confessionis*, vol. 2, *Gesammelte Aufsätze und kleine Schriften* (Berlin und Schleswig Holstein: Verlag Die Spur GmbH & Co. Christliche Buchhandels KG, 1976), 254.

<sup>24</sup> Franz Pieper, “Von der Einigkeit im Glauben,” in *Verhandlungen der zwölften Versammlung der Evang.-luth. Synodalconferenz zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 8. Bis 14. August 1888*, 6–35 (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia Verlag (M.C. Barthel, Agent), 1888), 6. Author’s translation; emphasis original. The entire essay is available in an English translation in *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod’s Great Era of Unity and Growth*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison. ([Fort Wayne]: Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 571–599.

31 reads: "For this reason the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments." The allusion to AC VII is unmistakable, except that here, instead of "the teaching of the doctrine of the gospel," the text reads "in teaching and in all the articles of faith." Thus, as the argument goes, the doctrine of the gospel and all the articles of faith must be understood synonymously as the summary of Christian teaching or the gospel in the wider sense. This interpretation was attacked by David Truemper. While he agreed that the terms are synonymous, he understood "articles of faith" to mean the gospel in the narrow sense.<sup>25</sup>

### III. An Evaluation of the Interpretations of AC VII

Regarding the interpretation of AC VII as the acts of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments, several objections may be raised. First, the Latin qualifiers *pure* and *recte* speak against such an understanding.<sup>26</sup> Second, the gospel is not simply a freeing speech act; it has content. The sharp distinction between the gospel as the efficacious communication of the forgiveness of sins through an act of God, not an act of man, and doctrine as a human reflection on the witness of the revelation, either as an ongoing process or also as the result in propositional statements, owes more to Ritschl and his antimetaphysical bias and, in the twentieth century and beyond, to Barth's understanding of the word of God and doctrine than to either Scripture or the reformers.

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<sup>25</sup> See David Truemper, "How Much Is Enough?," *Missouri in Perspective* 6 (1979): 23, 5–6 and David Truemper, "The Catholicity [*sic!*] of the Augsburg Confession: CA VII and FC X on the Grounds for the Unity of the Church," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, no. 3 (1980): 11–23.

<sup>26</sup> Elert writes: "But that Melancthon was by no means willing or able to let a general promise to preach the Gospel be what was required to establish agreement—as Ritschl declared—can be seen from the fact that although his first draft of the seventh article contained a formula that could be interpreted in this way, he gave an exact definition of this formula in the final version." Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 272. He continues: "No mere reciting of the Gospel contained in the Holy Scripture gives one assurance with regard to the basis of church unity; this must be done by the 'exposition' (*Auslegung*), the understanding of the Gospel which can be recognized when the doctrine of the church is examined. This is what the aforementioned additions—'rightly' (*recte*) and 'true' (*vera*)—express. And the Augsburg Confession formulates what the evangelicals mean by the right doctrine of the Gospel" (273).

Such a distinction between the gospel and doctrine results in a near separation of the two, which is problematic. How can the identity of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments be ascertained except through a description of what the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are? And what is such a description but a form of doctrine? Is it possible to agree in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments but to have a different understanding of what the gospel and the sacraments are? With attendant confusion and inconsistency, yes; but, normally, what one believes will inform how one preaches and administers the sacraments, and how one preaches and administers the sacraments will, in turn, shape what one believes.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, I agree with those authors who take “the doctrine of the gospel” to imply also content, the teaching about the gospel, not only the act of preaching.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, both the “preaching” of the German text and the “teaching” of the Latin text must be taken seriously. To say that *docere* simply equals preaching, as Maurer and many others do, is insufficient. Theodor Mahlmann showed in a detailed study of the meaning of the word *doctrina* that its semantic field encompasses the meanings of an act of teaching, the subject matter, and that which is taught. According to Mahlmann, all of these meanings come into play in AC VII, as well.<sup>29</sup>

In the second understanding of AC VII, namely, that consensus concerning the gospel in the narrow sense and the doctrine of the sacraments is necessary, at least the connection between the preaching of the gospel and doctrine is seen. But is this understanding—that only an agreement in fundamental articles (to use the terminology of later orthodoxy) is necessary for the unity of the church—tenable? Looking at the Lutheran separation from Rome in the sixteenth century, one could argue that it was

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<sup>27</sup> I am not endorsing the maxim *lex orandi statuit legem credendi* without qualification. This principle, if taken as saying that doctrine is subordinate to the liturgical life of the church, works only in a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox setting, where the life of the church has a built-in infallibility. Liturgy by itself does not validate dogmatic statements because liturgy can go horribly wrong, as the abomination of the Roman mass shows. Both liturgy and preaching are subject to Holy Scripture and must be evaluated by it.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., William Ernst Nagel, *Luthers Anteil an der Confessio Augustana: Eine historische Untersuchung* (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1930), 94.

<sup>29</sup> Theodor Mahlmann, “Doctrina im Verständnis nachreformatorischer lutherischer Theologie,” in *Vera doctrina: Zur Begriffsgeschichte der Lehre von Augustinus bis Descartes: L’idée de doctrine d’Augustine à Descartes* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), 204.

indeed disagreement concerning the gospel in the narrow sense and the understanding of the sacraments that disrupted the church's unity. Similarly, the breaking point between the Lutherans and the Reformed was the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, the Formula of Concord not only deals with question like these but also contains articles on the descent into hell and predestination, both of which are not fundamental articles. Moreover, Article XII, "Concerning Other Factions and Sects That Never Subscribed to the Augsburg Confession," illustrates what sort of consensus in doctrine the authors of the Formula deemed necessary for church unity. The article provides a long list of the doctrines of the Anabaptists, "which [are] not to be tolerated or permitted in the church, or in public affairs, or in domestic life" (FC SD XII 9). Then the article continues with a rejection of the errors of the Schwenckfelders and the teachings of the new Arians and Antitrinitarians (FC SD XII 28–40). Therefore, since the authors of the Formula are disinclined to be in the same church as these false teachers, it follows that agreement on the christological and trinitarian dogma of the church must also be part of AC VII's consensus required for church unity—that is, if one assumes a continuity and doctrinal harmony between the Formula and the Augsburg Confession.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the declaration at the end of this article is telling:

All these and similar articles, and whatever other further errors are attached to these or follow from them, we reject and condemn as incorrect, false, heretical and opposed to the Word of God, the three Creeds, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Catechism of Luther. All upright Christians would and should avoid them if they hold dear the welfare of their souls and their salvation. (FC SD XII 39)

It appears, though, that either "gospel" and "doctrine of the gospel" in AC VII either do not mean the same thing or that gospel in both places is

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<sup>30</sup> This point was made by John Theodore Mueller, "Notes on the 'Satis Est' in Article VII of the Augustana," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18 (1947), 409. Likewise, Schlink writes: "Even though in the statements of the Augsburg Confession about the unity of the church, no direct mention is made of the unity of creed [rather, of 'confessions' since the German reads 'Bekennntnis'], this unity is incomparably more urgent than uniformity in external ordinances. For the confession is nothing but the formulation '*consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum*' (AC VII 2), which, though considered sufficient, is yet demanded as necessary for the true unity of the church. The confession is nothing but the unanimous fixing of the '*pure*' and '*recte*' of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the Scriptures." Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 206.

to be taken as the gospel in the wide sense. If one takes it as the gospel in the wide sense, then AC VII no longer mentions the gospel and the sacraments as those instruments through which faith is given and the church as the congregation of believers is constituted. To overcome this challenge, Robert Preus suggested two different meanings, namely, that “gospel” is to be understood in the narrow sense and “doctrine of the gospel” in the wide sense.<sup>31</sup> It may sound somewhat forced to assume such a difference, but Preus points to AC XXVIII 5, where the word “gospel” is used in both the wide and narrow sense in close proximity. Thus, it would not be completely without precedent in the Augsburg Confession.

Kurt Marquart has repeatedly proposed a different interpretation.<sup>32</sup> He holds fast to the same meaning of “gospel” and “doctrine of the gospel.” He understands both usages to be the gospel in the narrow sense—a gospel, though, that includes the entire creed. Nevertheless, Marquart concludes that since, in practice, the gospel is distinct from the law but can never be separated from it, “it comes to the same thing whether the Gospel in AC VII is taken in its narrow or wide sense.”<sup>33</sup>

Marquart raises the important point of the coherence of the gospel with the biblical message. The gospel in the narrow sense can be expressed in a short, simple formula, as the Augsburg Confession does: “namely that God justifies not on account of our merits, but those who on account of Christ believe that they have been received in grace on account of Christ” (AC V 3; author’s translation). But should this mean, for example, that questions regarding the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and Christ’s resurrection are excluded from the pure teaching of the gospel? Obviously, the gospel is not purely taught when the eternal sonship of Christ is denied because then “Christ” means something else. Moreover, as the debates on free will after Luther’s death show, the gospel also makes certain statements about man’s condition that, when denied, lead to a false understanding of the gospel. Thus, even though the doctrine of the loss of the image and likeness of God through the fall and the loss of free will is certainly not gospel in the narrow sense, it is nevertheless necessary in order to preach the gospel purely. The same is true for the right administration

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Preus, “The Basis for Concord,” in *Doctrine is Life: Essays on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 353.

<sup>32</sup> Kurt E. Marquart, “Augsburg Confession VII Revisited,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981): 17–26; Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* (Fort Wayne: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 53–55.

<sup>33</sup> Marquart, *The Church*, 55.

of the sacraments. The sacraments are not rightly administered according to Christ's institution when there is no instruction on the sacrament. Likewise, a church that does not practice closed communion or a church that communes members of heterodox churches does not administer the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution. Thus, one does not need to accept Preus's interpretation of assuming two different meanings of "gospel" and "doctrine of the gospel" in order to avoid a reductionistic understanding of the consensus necessary for church unity.

Thus, AC VII necessitates agreement in all the articles taught in the Augsburg Confession. But can agreement be restricted to that, as many have held? With this question comes the debate on the question of *de jure* and *de facto*, terms that refer to the confessional commitment of a church body. All Lutheran church bodies have some kind of subscription to the Lutheran Confessions in their constitutions. Is such a subscription both necessary and sufficient, or are there also specific requirements concerning how this confessional subscription shapes the life of the church? The dangers on either side are obvious. If one stresses the *de jure* aspect, the Confessions might be legally binding but, nevertheless, a dead letter in the life of the church. On the other hand, if one stresses *de facto*, then any deviation from the Confessions at any place in a church would mean that the consensus is broken and fellowship is destroyed.

A pure *de jure* point of view is incompatible with AC VII in which the content and action of teaching and administering the sacraments are indistinguishable. An agreement on a confession that is functionally inert does not constitute a consensus on the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Further, since the church is always under attack by the devil, false preaching and errors in the administration of the sacraments cannot be shut out entirely. The question, then, is how a church is to deal with false teaching. There are those in the church who are charged with distinguishing between pure doctrine and false doctrine, namely, bishops. The controversies after Luther's death that led to the Formula of Concord demonstrate that false doctrine must be identified, that a process must be established to bring about unity in doctrine, and that those who disagree must finally be deposed and fellowship with them severed. Such a process takes time, though, and to discern when there is no longer *casual* intrusion of error in a church, as the *Brief Statement* of 1932 put it, is not always an easy task.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine

Nevertheless, can the public doctrine necessary for the unity of the church be restricted to the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord? Based on the understanding of the authority of the word of God in the church articulated in the Confessions, the answer must be no. Rather, the church is bound to everything that God has said in Holy Scripture.<sup>35</sup> The Scriptures are the pure fountain of Israel, “according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated” (FC SD Summary 3). The Confessions are not sufficient in that they do not say everything concerning all teachings. They address the issues of their time and are also a clear articulation of the gospel. Nevertheless, if one restricts the necessary unity in teaching to what the Confessions say, then one declares everything else the Scriptures say to be unnecessary for the unity of the church, even if there is within the church a teaching that is blatantly anti-scriptural. But the toleration of anti-scriptural teachings would directly contradict the authority of Scripture in the church. Therefore, since the church cannot tolerate anti-scriptural teachings, it also cannot limit the meaning of the “pure teaching of the gospel” to only those things said in the Confessions. It must include everything that Scripture teaches. The Confessions’ main interest is in the distinction between divine doctrine and human teachings. Never do they entertain the idea that some teachings in Scripture are optional for the church.

#### IV. Fundamental Considerations in Regard to Doctrine

What is meant by doctrine? First, as mentioned above, doctrine can mean both teaching as an act and that which is taught. According to the latter definition, doctrine is everything that is taught in the church; accordingly, it encompasses also dogma and confessional documents. Doctrine as “the faith” (*fides quae*) deals with the gospel and consists of that which is taught in the church by those who are called to do so—pastors publicly and all Christians privately. Dogmas and confessions are doctrines that are formally adopted to guide the teaching of the church and to exclude false teachings from the life of the church.

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which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20:30; 1 Tim 1:3.” Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), §29.

<sup>35</sup> It is of course understood that the church reads the Old Testament through the New Testament and that it understands the center of the teaching of Scripture to be the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On one level, this teaching or doctrine is not identical to the Scriptures. It can use different words than the Scriptures use, it is produced by human beings, and it is fallible. It is also not identical with the Scriptures in the sense that the church's doctrine could ever replace the Scriptures.

On the other hand, there is also an identity of Scripture with doctrine. The church is commanded to speak and teach the word of God; thus, her preaching and teaching must, under certain conditions, be the word of God. For Barth, the witness of the church is never identical with the word of God. Because God is free and is never under our control, we cannot make him speak by saying certain words. For Lutherans, a distinction has to be made. If we talk about God giving his Spirit, here the *ubi et quando visum est deo* ("where and when it pleases God") of AC V has its place. But concerning the content of what is said, man can speak the word of God. In that sense, God has put himself into man's hands. Divine doctrine is identical with the word of God, or Scripture, in its propositional content (what it says).

Thus, the church's teachings claim to be what the Lord is saying today. Doctrine also claims to be identical with the teachings of the church of all times since orthodox Christianity does not believe in an ongoing revelation in the sense that new things are being revealed. The revelation of God, in regard to content, is completed with the end of the apostolic age. The teaching of the church does not have any authority in itself but has all its authority from Scripture. As such, the church's teaching is the interpretation of Scripture and must show its identity in its content. But in this identity of content, it participates in the authority and efficacy of Scripture because it too can be called the word of God.

## V. The Relationship between Gospel and Doctrine

One of the recurring themes in the discussion of AC VII is the relationship between gospel and doctrine. The first interpretation given above, namely, that AC VII only requires that the gospel be preached and the sacraments administered, creates not only a distinction but a separation between the gospel and doctrine. The gospel here is not defined primarily as content but as a specific communication from God to man in which God gives faith and man trusts in the promise of the gospel. As such, the communication of the gospel is in God's hands and cannot be effected by man. The gospel is, thus, a revelatory act of God. Doctrine, according to this position, on the other hand, is a human enterprise, the reflection on the gospel. Doctrine can be learned; it can be taught. Doctrine aims at understanding; the gospel aims at faith. If the gospel is identified with



doctrine, then faith is intellectualized and becomes an act of human reason. Such would, of course, be contrary to the Small Catechism, which teaches that we cannot believe in Jesus Christ by our own reason or strength.

Here the long shadow of Karl Barth looms large over Lutheran theology. His interest was to maintain that God reveals God so that all human words can be a witness to the revelation, the medium, if and when it pleases God to use them, but that even the Scriptures are not simply the word of God in a static sense. Neither is doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

Lutheran theology understands the word of God and, thus, the gospel differently than Barth. For Barth, the word of God is an event in which God communicates to man. As such, it is always salvific. That the communication happens is up to God; man cannot make God communicate in any way. Thus, no human word can be identified with the word of God. For Lutherans, however, there is a difference between the word of God and the salvific effect of the word of the God. A sentence can be the word of God, but it does not always result in a communication that is salvific. Rather, God works faith where and when it pleases him. Nevertheless, there is an identifiable and stable content to the word of God.<sup>37</sup>

The gospel in the narrow sense is, of course, more than content, more than a proposition, but it is not less. The gospel has a content, a referential aspect, and even though its proper form is that of a promise, not of a propositional statement, it implies propositional statements. In the New Testament one finds the gospel not only as a promise but as the story that is the foundation of the gospel in history, namely, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, one finds reflection on the meaning and implications of the gospel, especially in the epistolary literature. This teaching of the gospel in its comprehensive sense in the New Testament is "doctrine," and, as such, it is binding for the church of all times. Doctrine

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<sup>36</sup> Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* 1:2, 852.

<sup>37</sup> Barth does not believe that any word will serve as the human word in which God's speaking happens since the church only has the promise of biblical preaching and because the primary form of the word of God is Christ, who is witnessed to in the Scriptures. But the decisive act is the witness of the Scriptures, not the handing down of content. There is, nevertheless, a structural similarity to Lutheran theology here. The distinction between law and gospel and its proper application in concrete situations has the character of an event. It is not enough to say what the law and the gospel are in a given situation. They must be appropriately applied. The gospel said to the unrepentant sinner so that it confirms him in his sin is not a proper preaching of the gospel; in fact, it is not a preaching of the gospel at all.

is not first and foremost a human reflection on the Christ-event or the gospel. Rather, it is the background, foundation, and implication of the gospel as given in Holy Scripture. All teachings in the church are bound to this divinely-given doctrine because they can and ought to be evaluated by the teaching of Scripture. However, the Lutheran Confessions also believe that there can be teaching that, though it does not say everything that the Scriptures say, is identical with the Scriptures in regard to its content and can, therefore, be used to evaluate the preaching and teaching in the church. "Since for thorough, permanent unity in the Church it is, above all things, necessary that we have a comprehensive, unanimous approved summary and form, wherein is brought together from God's Word the common doctrine, reduced to a brief compass, which the churches that are of the true Christian religion confess . . ." (FC SD Summary 1).<sup>38</sup>

## VI. Doctrine and the Church

Since the church is the assembly of believers in which the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered, and since the preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments are mandates, the test of a faithful church is whether she does what she is mandated to do. Therefore, the doctrine of a church, as the actual proclamation and content of the church's preaching, must be in harmony with Scripture. Unscriptural proclamation and teaching is sinful and constitutes a form of disobedience to the Lord on the part of those who are responsible for the church's teaching. This ultimately includes all members since not only pastors and church officials, but all Christians, have a duty in regard to the public teaching of a church.<sup>39</sup> False teaching and the toleration of false teaching is a sin, and those who are guilty of it must be called to repentance. It is, therefore, quite obvious that a church that consistently advocates and preaches false doctrine is unfaithful to her Lord and cannot be recognized as an orthodox church but must be regarded as a false church. This is harsh language and might sound unloving and judgmental to the refined

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<sup>38</sup> F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau, ed., *Concordia Triglotta: Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, deutsch-lateinisch-englisch* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

<sup>39</sup> All Christians are told to beware of false prophets (Matt 7:15). It is a characteristic of Christians that they listen to Christ's voice alone, not to the hireling (John 10:4). "And as other Christians are obliged to censure the rest of the pope's errors, so must they rebuke him when he avoids and obstructs the church's inquiry and true judgment" (Tr 56). See also C. F. W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office*, trans. John T. Mueller, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 330ff.

theological mind, but Christians *must* judge doctrine, and what other standard is there to judge doctrine than the word of God? If they find false doctrine, what else can they say than that such is an act of unfaithfulness to the church's Lord? And what else can they do in the face of manifest sin and impenitence, when false doctrine is defended, but pronounce the sentence of the law and retain sin? The unity of the church is a unity of faith, created by the gospel. It cannot subsist but as a unity in the word of God; therefore, those who reject the word of God sin against the unity of the church. Consequently, there can be no church fellowship between an orthodox church and heterodox church bodies. Rather, an orthodox church must call the members of a heterodox church to repentance.

### VII. Agreement in Doctrine as Essential for Church Fellowship in the New Testament

But is all of this faithful to the New Testament? Does not the New Testament offer a plurality that would contradict such a demand for doctrinal unity?<sup>40</sup> Has not historical-critical exegesis shown the disparate and theologically contradictory nature of the New Testament, not to speak of the Old Testament? This depends on whether there is doctrinal unity in the New Testament—and in the entire Bible—or if there are contradictory theologies within it. Because the New Testament, however, is not simply an assemblage of early Christian documents but the work of the Holy Spirit as the chief author, there are no contradictions in it.

Two passages concerning doctrinal unity shall be referenced here. First, one passage often quoted in this context are the final words in the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Christ's mandate to his church is that she keep everything that he has commanded (Matt 28:20: διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν). A christological understanding of the Scriptures implies that this refers not only to Christ's teaching before his ascension but also to his teaching through the apostles and the teaching of the Old Testament. Everything in Scripture that the church is mandated to preach has, therefore, to do with Christ's teaching—indeed, with Christ and the gospel in the narrow sense.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Jörg Baur, "Lehre, Irrlehre, Lehrzucht," in *Einsicht und Glaube: Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 231.

<sup>41</sup> See Wilhelm M. Oesch, "Göttliche Lehre nach den Lutherischen Symbolen," in *Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura: Grundzüge lutherischer Theologie* (Gr. Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1996), 257.

Second, Paul's battle for the one gospel demonstrates that doctrine is important. In Romans 6:17, for example, he writes: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed" (NASB). Paul talks about the *τύπος διδασχῆς*, the form of doctrine, to which the Christians have been committed. This most likely refers to some sort of baptismal creed or creedal statement.<sup>42</sup> Thus, to become a Christian is to be committed to a creed, a doctrinal statement.

Because there is a distinct *τύπος διδασχῆς*, the apostle can then exhort the Romans at the end of the letter to avoid those who make dissensions against the doctrine they have learned (Rom 16:17). Thus Ernst Käsemann, not known as a hardline confessional Lutheran, writes:

The apostle speaks of the faith which is believed and which is imparted and received in the form of a fixed tradition of which important parts may be found in 1 Cor 11:23, 15:1. This can and must be learned. There are opponents who are trying to replace this tradition by another one. To that extent Paul furnished the impulse to the fact that the Pastorals can speak of "sound doctrine" and appeal to it. As noted earlier, the gospel is more than the kerygma. It is the norm of this and from this angle it becomes doctrine.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Käsemann writes: "In this light it makes good sense that the reference is not to the giving of the tradition to the baptized but the commitment of the baptized to the tradition. The attraction expressed by *τῷ τύπῳ . . . εἰς* suggests a Jewish form of expression for the commitment of a student to the teaching of a rabbi . . . If this is not the point, it should be considered that faith means more than personal engagement. Eph. 4:5 with its threefold acclamation, which probably derives from the act of baptism, shows that steps had to be taken quite early against heretical doctrines of salvation. Romans as a whole gives evidence of the process of linking proclamation with a clear interpretation of the gospel and presupposes not uniformly established but christologically centered confessions which serves the same purpose. *Τύπος διδασχῆς* corresponds in antithetical parallelism to the Jewish *μόρφωσις τῆς γνώσεως καὶ ἀληθείας* of 2:20, which likewise means commitment to specific teaching. As the baptized is committed to the Lord, he is also claimed for a creed . . . which sets out in binding form the significance of this Lord." Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 181–182. See also Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Frieberg i.B., Basel, Wien: Herder, 1977), 209.

<sup>43</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 417. See also Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, 447–448, and Gerhard Delling, *Wort Gottes und Verkündigung im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk Verlag, 1971), 122.

Far from being against the New Testament, the concern for adherence to the true teaching and the avoidance of all false teaching is present throughout the New Testament.<sup>44</sup>

### VIII. Conclusion

The unity of the church is given by her Lord. It is a unity of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Therefore, it is also a unity of faith in what the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Holy Scripture, has said. Any rejection of the word of God penned by the Holy Spirit through the human authors is a not only a sin against the divine majesty but also a violation of the unity of the church. Such a sin cannot be ignored by the church but, like any other sin, must be named, and the person must be called to repentance. If the call to repentance is not heeded, then the sin must be bound.

Churches might be more or less consistent in their call to repentance. An orthodox church is a church that preaches the gospel purely and administers the sacraments according to their institution, which includes everything the Holy Spirit has revealed. An orthodox church is also vigilant and practices brotherly admonition toward those who do not preach the gospel purely or administer the sacraments according to the institution, and if necessary, calls them to repentance. This is done out of love for them and the congregations that are led astray by them. No one has a built-in inerrancy; thus, one should be ready not only to give admonition but also to receive it. It serves well to remember these words of Jesus: "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt 7:12, NASB). In this respect, Barth was right with the view that pure doctrine is a process. Though the content of pure doctrine is given to us in Holy Scripture and is in that sense *not* a process, the church is called to evaluate her practice and be purified by the word of God continually.

This attitude is sometimes derided as "incessant self-purification" and can then be associated with all kinds of psychological disorders. Most would not think that a daily shower is "incessant self-purification" but a rational way to deal with dirt and sweat. Whether something is excessive depends first on the situation, second on the goal. Regarding the situation, is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod being contaminated by false doctrine, or is it cruising through life on the auto-pilot of orthodoxy? It seems the first is true because the church is made up of sinners living in a sinful world. Regarding the goal, is unity in all the articles of faith

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<sup>44</sup> Other passages that speak to this include 2 John 9-11 and 2 Tim 3:16-17.

something the church desires, as it is required by the Lord of the church? Hopefully all can answer yes to this. Therefore, concern for pure doctrine and continual vigilance against false doctrine are completely appropriate and necessary if a church wishes to remain orthodox.

But does such an approach to doctrine paralyze a church and prevent it from reaching out? In response to this, one might ask whether the concern for personal hygiene prevents one from living a full life. Apart from pathological examples, the answer is, of course, no. Doctrinal purity serves the mission of the church since the mission of the church is to preach God's word, not human words. Since life is short, one must evaluate how he spends his time, but to strive to preach the gospel *purely* or simply *to preach* the gospel are hardly alternatives. In the end, of course, this is a question of how each person will fulfill the duties of his *Stand*, or estate, and of his place in the church. Every member of the church is to do his part so that the doctrine is kept pure, and each has a duty to the end that the gospel is preached to both unbelievers and believers. This means that Missouri Synod Lutherans should continue to study and grow in the knowledge of God's word and to work in their immediate context, that is, their circuits and districts, so that doctrine and the discussion of doctrine take their rightful place. When there is a question of false doctrine, we must be in conversation with our erring brethren and never tire in our effort to convince the brother or congregation of the error. And when no remedy is found, then it is necessary for the Synod to deal forthrightly with manifest heresy.

The traditional position of the Lutheran Church that the word of God and only the word of God is preached in its fullness might seem daunting or impossible. Nevertheless, this is God's mandate, and only this has God's promise. Easier ways, devised by men, are born out of unbelief and cater to the weakness of the flesh. The church needs to be encouraged not to despair and give in to the pragmatic, minimalistic understanding of doctrinal unity and church fellowship. Either the word of God, and thus God himself, unites us and keeps us in this unity, making us his church, or a mixture of a minimalistic consensus and some historical and sociological factors unites us. In the latter case, the church might still be among us if the gospel is preached, but we have become a false church.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Peter Brunner, "Die Kirche und die Kirchen heute: Thesen zu einer konkreten Ekklesiologie und einem oekumenischen Ethos," *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* 8 (1954): 243.

A topic such as that is, first and foremost, a call for reflection: do we actually take doctrine as seriously as we confess we do? Is this reflected in our preaching and teaching? Do we seek unity of doctrine inside and outside of our fellowship, or have we conceded defeat and chosen to live with separations and disunity? Striving for unity is not easy; it is emotionally draining and, on the surface, is not as rewarding as many other endeavors, but it is necessary. Doctrinal controversy and the battle against false teachings is a part of the life of the church, just as it was part of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Wilhelm M. Oesch, "Kirche und Einheit der Lehre II," in *Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura. Grundzüge lutherischer Theologie* (Gr. Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1996), 92.