Satis iam: Enough Already!

<u>Introduction</u>.--When Emperor Charles V called for a Diet in A.D. 1530 to convene in Augsburg, he was concerned about two things: a united defense against the invasion of Austrian lands by the Turks and the divisions which had arisen between the Roman and Lutheran camps within his territory. These religious disagreements had caused the Lutherans to separate themselves from fellowship or communion with the Roman camp. One of the purposes of the Diet of Augsburg was to restore unity among the Romans and the Lutherans.

Listen to Charles' invitation,

"The diet is to consider furthermore what might and ought to be done and resolved upon <u>regarding the division and separation in the holy faith and the Christian religion;</u> and that this may proceed the better and more salubriously, [*the Emperor urged*] to allay divisions, to cease hostility, to surrender past errors to our Savior, and to display diligence in hearing, understanding, and considering with love and kindness the opinions and views of everybody, in order to reduce them to one single Christian truth and agreement, to put aside whatever has not been properly explained or done by either party, so that we all may adopt and hold one single and true religion; and may all live in one communion, church, and unity, even as we all live and do battle under one Christ."¹

In keeping with Charles' request, Elector John had the Lutherans prepare and bring to Augsburg a "defense" of "those articles on account of which said division, both in faith and in other outward church customs and ceremonies, continues."² Although modified to be more of a confession than a defense of corrected abuses, due to the appearance of 404 Propositions by Johannes Eck, the Lutherans address the topic of unity in Augsburg Confession, Article VII, "Of the Church."

"1] Also they{*the Lutheran theologians*} teach that *one holy Church* is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. 2] And to the true unity of the Church it is enough (*satis est*) to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and 3] the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. 4] As Paul says: *One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, etc. Eph. 4, 5. 6."

In Lutheran circles the Latin words, *satis est*: "it is enough," are a short hand way of referencing Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. On the one hand, true unity does not require the same human traditions and rites in all congregations. On the other hand, the requirement for true unity is nothing less than complete and full Scriptural agreement concerning "the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments."

Among confessional Lutherans there is not much disagreement that the *satis est* of Article VII sets the required basis for establishing church unity. However, now that false teaching or unscriptural practices have reared their ugly head to become the accepted, or at least tolerated, doctrine and practice of various synods, there is great disagreement concerning when it is time to say, "Satis iam," or "Enough, already," and dissolve unity and thus separate from falsehood and false teachers.

¹ Concordia Triglotta, Historial Introductions to the Symbolic Books, p.15.

² Ibid, p.15.

<u>Supposition</u>.--Over Christmas I was speaking with a couple of engineers who were telling me about their work in the oil refining and chemical production industries. Each of them told how their plants had become computerized, so that rather than technicians looking at individual pressure gauges, a control panel blinks either a caution light or a warning light. The yellow caution light means that prescribed production levels are out of whack and the computer is taking action to rectify the situation, however no action is required by the technician. The red warning light means that corrective action has not worked, the computer is shutting down the production, and the technician must spring into action to fix the problem.

The question of when is it *satis iam* (enough already) is comparable to wanting to know the exact threshold point which triggers the red warning light. Although there is an action point at which fellowship is to be severed, the present disagreement over that particular point is not the result of pastors and people not knowing the correct answer to the *satis iam*. Generally speaking, the correct answer to the *satis iam* is the *satis est*. It is "enough already" when there is no longer complete agreement over the content of the "it is sufficient," which is, Scriptural doctrine and mandated Scriptural practices.

Now to be sure, it is not the mere presence of a false statement or a false practice that should cause us to withdraw our congregational or synodical membership. Just as our individual sanctification is not perfect in this world, so also a group of believers when gathered into a congregation will not be perfect either. Thus, it is not the **casual intrusion of error** that breaks fellowship. "A church body loses its orthodoxy only when it no longer applies Rom. 16:17, hence does not combat and eventually remove the false doctrine, but tolerates it without reproof and thus actually grants it equal right with the truth" (Christian Dogmatics, III, p.422-423).

The supposition of this paper is that the present confusion over *satis iam* is the result of confessional Lutherans having replaced our theological gauges with the equivalent of control panel lights. As my engineer relatives complained, the technicians see the yellow caution lights but continue to drink coffee and eat donuts. We know there is false teaching and false practice, but we refuse to address it by following the **Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and false practice within the church.** With the passage of time, we have taught ourselves to no longer even notice the yellow cautions lights which signal a deviation from God's Word. By the time the red warning lights come on the plant is already shutting itself down.

With this paper, I will present the Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and false practice within the church. The Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and false practice does not kick in after a particular threshold is reached. Pastors are to begin to deal with false doctrine and false practice, just as soon as it appears. The Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and false practice includes (1) exposing falsehood and speaking the truth, it includes exposing false practices, holding to mandated Scriptural practices, and (2) refusing to participate in false practices. The goal is always repentance and a return to true teaching and practice. When that warning is not heeded and there is not repentance, then the false teacher is marked and avoided as unrepentant, and fellowship is severed.

<u>Three False Approaches</u>.--Before I can proceed to present the Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and practice, we need to overturn a few false approaches to dealing with falsehood.

The first false approach is to categorize the deviations from God's Word according to our own perceived importance. My congregation was told by a synodical official concerning our six points of false synodical teaching and practice that he agreed with us in

principle, but not in importance. He said, "These six points do not rise to the level in which I would leave the synod." Later in the same meeting he was asked what it would take for him to resign, he said, "If they ordain a women, then I would leave."

Jesus does not say, "If you hold to 90% of my Word, you are my disciples." He says, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Jesus does not make distinctions between important and non-important deviations from God's Word. Jesus does not allow fellowship with those who preach the fundamental doctrines, or most of them. It is all or nothing.

This reductionist kind of thinking is a direct denial of the *satis est* of Augsburg Confession VII. When Augsburg Confession VII speaks of agreement in "the doctrine of the Gospel," it is not supporting a Gospel reductionism, or any kind of reduction of Scriptural teaching, but understands that the Gospel message is found in all the Scriptures. The term "Gospel" in Augsburg Confession VII is the entire teaching of Christ. Article IV of the Apology speaks of the Gospel in the wide sense saying, "For the Gospel convicts all men that they are under sin, that they all are subject to eternal wrath and death, <u>and</u> offers, for Christ's sake, remission of sin and justification, which is received by faith" (62). Jesus not only said, "...the Scriptures cannot be broken" (John 10:35), but also, "...it is they{*the Scriptures*} which testify of me" (John 5:39).

The second false approach draws a distinction between false teaching which is not to be tolerated and false practice which is not considered good, but is allowed. This approach does not separate the Scriptures into necessary and unnecessary teachings when determining fellowship, it separates doctrine from practice. Supposedly, this second approach I'm told lets, "God be true and every man a liar," to kind of quote Romans 3:4. However, the problem is that though it attempts to leave the truth of God's Word in place, it then removes the necessity of faith in God's Word through which the gifts are given. The argument in Romans 3 is not that we ought to allow man to be liars, who are "without faith," but that a "lack of faith does not nullify God's faithfulness. We still need to teach of the faith that receives the benefits. Faith trusts in the Word and thus follows the Scriptural practice.

Whenever I go to visit a delinquent member, I always point out their sin of despising preaching and God's Word and then I exhort them to return to God's house to receive forgiveness. I am usually told, "Don't worry, Pastor. I haven't forgotten Jesus." According to this second false approach, I should comfort myself with their intellectual knowledge apart from faith. When the member who is living with another woman and is in the process of divorcing his wife tells me, "Pastor, I don't believe in divorce." According to this false approach, I should tell him, "Good, you still know the official teaching. Go in peace."

Faith is not intellectual knowledge, but trust in the promises. It is not trust in the Word of Jesus, when we despise preaching and God's Word. When you seek a divorce to solve your marital problems, you are, in fact, trusting in divorce. You can't have faith in the teaching and then not practice it. "Faith without works is dead."

When I mention synodical false practice, I have been told again and again, "The official position of the synod is still ______ (fill in the blank)." It doesn't matter if the neighboring congregation practices open communion, because a 1983 synodical commission which wrote about closed communion trumps it. It doesn't matter that your regional overseer

allows his entire district to practice open communion, because that's not the official position. In fact, it doesn't matter if your own congregation practices open communion, because your synod officially teaches closed communion. And if perhaps the last convention did pass something that was wrong, I've been told, "As long as the Synod believes in an inerrant Word and a *quia* subscription to the Book of Concord, I'm staying."

Augsburg Confession Article VII does not support this separation between doctrine and practice. It says, "And to the true unity of the Church it is enough (*satis est*) to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel **and** the administration of the Sacraments." True unity is based on doctrine and practice. Just as the Gospel cannot be reduced to one doctrine among many, so also the "administration of the Sacraments," cannot be reduced to the ten minute liturgy of baptism at the head of the service and the last 15 minutes of Holy Communion at the end of the Divine Service. The pastoral administration of Baptism(Augsburg Confession, Article IX), Lord's Supper(Article X), private Absolution(Article XI) including the corresponding life-long practice of Repentance(Article XII) and the use of the same(Article XIII) by faith in the members are all included in the words "the administration of the Sacraments." Proper administration of the doctrine is not optional for unity.

"A church body is orthodox only if the true doctrine, as we have it in the Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbols, is actually taught in its pulpits and its publications and not merely 'officially' professed as its faith. Not the "official" doctrine, but the actual teaching determines the character of a church body, because Christ enjoins that all things whatsoever He has commanded His disciples should actually be taught and not merely acknowledged in an 'official document' as the correct doctrine. It is patent that faith in Christ will be created and preserved through the pure Gospel, only when that Gospel is really proclaimed."³

There are some practices which are optional. "Human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men," are addressed in Article XV. If the human traditions are "profitable unto tranquility and good order in the Church, as particular holy days, festivals, and the like," then they ought to be observed. If they are "instituted to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins," they are "useless and contrary to the Gospel," and must not be observed. If these human traditions are silly but can be observed without sin, we should use them to learn obedience to the authorities.

Nevertheless, the God-instituted sacraments are to be rightly administered if there is to be unity. We practice private absolution because we believe the doctrine that "absolution is a voice of the Gospel. And absolution ought to be received by faith, in order that it may cheer the terrified conscience" (Ap IV, III, 150). We practice closed communion, because we believe the doctrine that "the body and blood of Christ are truly distributed to unworthy.... But they receive it for judgment" (FC SD VII 16). Practice is not optional, because it is none other than the application of doctrine. Practice is our faith in the doctrine acted out in our lives. 1 John 3:18 says, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Whenever Luther and the church fathers speak of the relative importance of the doctrine over practice, it is not to render practice unnecessary. What they are saying is that if practice is wrong, you can use doctrine to correct it. But if doctrine is wrong, there will never be correction of practice. Similarly faith is more important than love, because love flows forth from faith. If there is a lack of love, I can return to faith. If there is a lack of faith, there will never be true love.

³ Christian Dogmatics, III, p. 422.

The third false approach denies that as a result of one's public profession of faith, the doctrine and practice of others becomes one's own doctrine and practice. A person's public profession of faith is determined by the particular congregation with which one belongs and the synod with which one's congregation belongs. Whenever you join a congregation, you are stating that the teaching of that congregation, which sounds forth from its pulpit, is your teaching and belief. Whenever you receive communion at the altar of a congregation, it is understood that you are in full agreement with the doctrine and practices of that congregation. Your public profession is determined by the altar and pulpit of your home congregation. If your congregation professes that the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God, then that is your public profession, simply by virtue of your membership. If your congregation allows syncretism, then that is your public profession as well.

I have heard pastors disgruntled with the false teaching and false practices of others in which they are in fellowship say, "I'm just going to stay home and be a faithful pastor in my own congregation." Although it sounds as if the pastor is separating himself, as long as he is still associated with these others by virtue of their joint membership, this pastor's public confession still includes the doctrine and practice of the other. Fellowship implies that there is agreement in doctrine and practice. If there are differences in doctrine and practice between the two, then it must mean that the differences are not consequential.

When it comes to a person's public profession, the motto, "If you don't have anything good to say, just don't say anything at all," is just not Scriptural. When false teaching or false practice arises within the congregation or in your synodical affiliation, the proper response is not to say, "Well, I don't teach that," or "I don't do those kinds of things." St. Paul tells Timothy, "that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim 1:3). If a pastor is not condemning falsehood and warning his flock of the danger of false teaching and false practice, he is not being faithful at home or anywhere else. Although we ought to warn God's people of all dangers, we should especially warn them of those that are closest, those with whom we are in fellowship and are teaching or practicing falsely.

The Presbyterian minister, who lives a block away from my home, has a car with a license plate which says "TULIP." Familiar with this acronym for the five points of Calvinism and not having met a real American who wasn't Arminian in practice, I asked him about TULIP. He told me that he was pretty sure that in his Presbyterian church in town that there were only about 5 people who still believed it, and two of them were he and his wife. Many papers have been written about denominational confusion. I have heard Lutheran pastors who through free conferences and other communications have realized that actual practice does not always follow the official teaching and practice of one's synod. There has been talk about a reshuffling of the Lutheran deck.

Those who say that we ought to commune the good guys, no matter what their denominational affiliation, are denying the implications of our public confession of faith. If the problem of denomination confusion is that people do not take their own profession of faith seriously, the solution is not to support them in their insincerity, but to encourage them to take their confession seriously. Let their yes be yes and their no, no. (2 Cor 1:18). Even if they individually believe, teach, and confess rightly, but belong to a heterodox synod, we still ought not to commune with them. We ought to tell them that the reason we cannot commune is due to their voluntary association with heterodoxy. The correct response is to tell them that we cannot

establish or determine fellowship based upon one's own practice alone, but it must also include one's public profession of faith.

<u>The Scriptural Way of Dealing with False Teaching and False Practice</u>.—Having addressed three false approaches, it is now time to present the Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and practice. **First, there must be a preaching and teaching of God's Word concerning the distinction between true teaching and false teaching.** The Word teaches that God's Word is true(John 17:17⁴) and that Christian truth can only be obtained by continuing in Christ's Word(John 8:31-32⁵). The Scriptures teach that every doctrine which sets itself against the Word is falsehood(2 Cor 10:5⁶) and an offense(Rom 16:17⁷). False teaching is the result of conceit and ignorance(1 Tim 6:3-4⁸). The Word teaches that there is no fellowship of light(truth) with darkness(falsehood) (2 Cor 6:14⁹).

Second, there is to be a separating of falsehood from the truth, in agreement with that preaching and teaching. The Word teaches the practices which flow from the doctrine distinguishing between truth and falsehood. God's Word teaches that pastors are to preach the truth at all times(2 Tim 4:2-5¹⁰), rightly dividing the word of truth(2 Tim 2:14-19¹¹). No part of God's Word can be omitted and nothing is to be added to the Word(Deut 4:2¹², Deut 12:32¹³, Rev 22:18-19¹⁴). Pastors are to preach the entire teaching of Christ(Mt 28:20¹⁵). Pastors are to

⁴ John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

⁵ John 8:31-32, "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³²"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

⁶ 2 Corinthians 10:5, "...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...."

⁷ Romans 16:17, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

⁸ 1 Timothy 6:3-4, "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions...."

⁹ 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 4:2-5, "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

¹¹ 2 Timothy 2:14-19, "Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. 15Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** 16But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. 19Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, **"Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."**

¹² Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

¹³ Deuteronomy 12:32, "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

¹⁴ Revelation 22:18-19, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."

warn against falsehood(Gal 1:6-7¹⁶). Pastors are not to allow or permit any false teaching(1 Tim $1:3^{17}$, 1 Tim $6:3-11^{18}$, 1 Tim $6:20^{19}$, 1 Peter $4:11^{20}$) in their midst. The hearers are to examine their pastors teaching(Acts $17:11^{21}$) and then listen to nothing but the truth(Col $2:8^{22}$). The hearers are to not receive false teachers(2 John $10:11^{23}$, 1 Tim $5:22^{24}$). They are to flee from false teachers(Rom $16:17^{25}$, 2 Cor $6:11-18^{26}$).

Therefore the Scriptures teach a full and complete agreement in Scriptural doctrine and mandated Scriptural practices (unity) as the basis for fellowship. 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The Scriptures do not allow

- 1) deviations from God's Word, according to our perceived importance;
- 2) a distinction between false teaching and false practice; or
- 3) a participation with the false teaching and false practices of others.

If that weren't enough warning, the Scriptures also teach that every offense of teaching and practice will spread and corrupt other doctrines. Galatians 5:9, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." Also see 1 Cor 5:6, 2 Cor 7:1.

¹⁵ Matthew 28:20, "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen."

¹⁶ Galatians 1:6-7, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 1:3, "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine...."

¹⁸ 1 Timothy 6:3-6, 11, "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself. ⁶Now godliness with contentment is great gain... ¹¹But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 6:20, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge."

²⁰ 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God...."

²¹ Acts 17:11, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so."

²² Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."

²³ 2 John 10-11, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."

²⁴ 1 Timothy 5:22, "Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure."

²⁵ For reference, see footnote #6.

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." ¹⁷Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

<u>A Clarification, but not an Exception</u>.—C.F.W. Walther is right when he says in Thesis VI of *Law and Gospel*, "In the second place, **the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full sweetness**, when, on the contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel." I would maintain that in each of the three false approaches above, not only is the Word of God not correctly taught, but the law against sin(false teaching and false practice) is not delivered in its full sternness.

On page two of this paper I have already mentioned that the **casual intrusion of error** does not break fellowship. The mere presence of a false statement or a false practice does not cause us to withdraw our congregational or synodical membership. A pastor is not called to a congregation to remove sinners, so that only saints remain members of his congregation. For then even the pastor would not stand. The pastor is to continue to separate members from their sin, through the full sternness of the Law and the full sweetness of the Gospel.

Although the Scriptures make a distinction between those who are weak Christians ready to receive instruction and those who stubbornly contradict the Word, this does not mean that the pastor is to speak weak law to those committing sins of weakness and harsh law to those clinging to their error. The doctrine of sins of weakness in individuals and the casual intrusion of errors among congregations and synods, does not result in any change in the Scriptural message delivered. Sin is "offense" (Rom 16:17) and should always receive the Law.

Although the Scriptural message of full Law and full Gospel does not change, the Scriptures do teach **a graduation or steps of Christian discipline, based on the graduated condition of the person.** In 2 Timothy 4:2, St. Paul uses different words for different graduations, "Convince(correct), rebuke, exhort(encourage), with all longsuffering and teaching." In Galatians 6²⁷, it speaks of a gentle approach that is done in meekness for the person "overtaken in any trespass." Initially, we do our best not to expose our neighbor to scorn and mockery before others(Matthew 18:15), in the hopes that they will heed the law. If they will not hear, we preach the same law again, but taking others along. Finally, there comes the point in which the same law again must be preached to the person, but this time the Scriptures say in 1 Timothy 5:20, "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear." Also see Gal 2:13-14. Thus Christian love and patience calls for discretion in order to avoid a hardening of the heart and a loss of reputation before others. In speaking the Word a pastor must consider man's general weakness, each one's personal weakness, a person's general disposition or temperament. Even the time and circumstance ought to be considered.

When it comes to dealing with the approval of false teaching and false practices within a synod, or the lack of discipline so that false teachings and false practices are tolerated, there is to be **a graduated approach**. When the error is first discovered, the truth must be spoken under the assumption that it will be corrected. If there is a refusal to correct the error, then the same law is applied again. This time there is to be a suspension of fellowship until the public offense is removed. Finally, when the synod refuses to return to the truth, there is to be a separation from a synod which clings to falsehood and harbors false teachers. Titus 3:10-11 says, "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned."

²⁷ Galatians 6:1-2, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

<u>Relative Quiet</u>.--To return to my engineering relatives and their computerized plants, it appears that we have been ignoring the yellow caution lights of false teaching and false practice for some time. In fact, more like our car's dummy lights(than a production plant), we don't even get a yellow light. All of a sudden, the red light says, "Stop and pull over. You're done." The car has been running poorly for years, but we have grown quite use to it. We thought that it was normal. When someone from the outside remarks about how poorly our car is running, we exclaim, "You are just looking for the perfect car."

In plain terms, pastors have not been speaking the truth in order to correct the errors of their people, nor have they protected their people from their errors of their leaders. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that the man of God, the pastor, has been thoroughly equipped for his work of speaking the truth because he has the Word of God. It says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." However, rather than reproof and correction, I found that **pastors are keeping quiet** concerning public confession, false teachers, and false synodical practices.

During the 6 years of speaking up before I left my former synod, I encountered 1/3 of the pastors who embraced and actively supported the new false teachings and practices. 1/3 of the pastors refused to take a stand and were simply good synodical franchisees, doing whatever Synod said. They were good pastors when under good leadership and bad pastors when under bad leadership. The final 1/3 claimed to be conservative. But here's the kicker, of those third who were conservative, less than ten percent of those actually told their people the truth about synodical false teaching.

If a pastor did actually speak the truth about synodical errors, it was a one time newsletter article. Understandably, the members reacted negatively because they haven't heard the truth about contemporary worship and are heavily into it themselves. In response, the pastor withdraws and doesn't speak about it again. "My people don't want to hear about it," he says. And then he goes back to doing blended worship, which is not everything the people want, but he's doing something. From then on, he preaches against safe topics like cursing and Harry Potter books and tells himself, "I'm just going to be faithful at home."

Our people have been learning from televangelists and the protestant bookstores, while we drink coffee at conferences and complain about their desire to sing, "In the garden." We send or even take our ladies to their regional meetings and then hold our nose while our own synod indoctrinates our members with American revivalism. We know the teachings of our Lutheran Confessions, but we do not practice them. We try to appease our members and our conscience by compromises. We call our Lenten series, "Forty days of Lutheran Purposes."

When the casual intrusion of error lays uncorrected for years it is not surprising that like my Presbyterian neighbor, there are many Lutheran congregations, but not many Lutherans. When the red warning light comes on, you assess the situation. Let's face it, there's not much you can do when 95% of your congregation does not want the Lutheranism you are offering. Is it no wonder that congregational members get angry? They were given no warning, and the next thing they hear is some renegade pastor says that their synod needs to be tossed aside.

<u>Speaking the Truth</u>.--With this paper, I don't want to start with what to do after the red warning light blinks, I want to go back to when the yellow caution light appeared. It's not that the Scriptures give separate and distinct approaches concerning what to do before or after false

doctrine and practice are tolerated and no longer reproved. The approach is the same. The Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and false practice includes two parts: (1) exposing falsehood and speaking the truth including exposing false practices and holding to mandated Scriptural practices, and then (2) refusing to participate in false teaching and false practices. The goal is always repentance and a return to true teaching and practice. When that warning is not heeded and there is not repentance, then the false teacher is marked and avoided as unrepentant, and fellowship is severed.

Titus 1:9 says that the overseer must be blameless... "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." Holding fast to the faithful word does not mean send up a trial balloon to see if the people will accept the teaching. Whenever David Benke committed syncretism and unionism in Yankee Stadium and Gerald Kieschnick approved of it, I taught how they were wrong to have done it. I got all kinds of reactions. Whenever Benke and Kieschnick continued to justify their actions, I prayed each Sunday in the Divine Service for their repentance that my member might be warned. When I was asked not to include that prayer, I explained that God's will was that false teachers repent and our people need to be warned of false teaching and practice. If I had not put the teaching into practice or had withdrawn the prayer, the people would have understood that it was either unimportant or a matter of personal preference.

When our congregation hosted the Circuit Reformation Service, those members from other congregations were really offended. Some told me that I knew they didn't agree with us and therefore I shouldn't have included the prayer. To which I responded, "But God's Word says that what they did was wrong." If I had not held fast to the Word and thus put it into practice, there would have been no reproof of error. I was told by others, "What good did it do?" According to Titus 1:9, "convict those who contradict" sound doctrine.

Now let's move on to **the second part** of dealing with false teaching and false practice. In accordance with the truth of God's Word there is to be **a separation from falsehood**. In theory, there is a logical progression of first teaching the difference between truth and falsehood and then second a separation of truth from falsehood. In other words, you need to know the difference, before you can separate the two. In actual practice, it's not that distinct. You don't preach the distinction for a certain length of time and then at some point begin to separate from falsehood. They are somewhat simultaneous.

As you first begin to teach the distinction you are separating truth and falsehood in the minds of the people. At the same time, you will be showing the people the distinction by your practice. When I told people that the prayer for repentance was God's Word and I couldn't omit it, their false ideas were being separated from the truth. I was telling them that their false ideas about syncretism would not and could not be tolerated along side with the truth. If I had not practiced it, I would have been a hypocrite. The reason they got mad, was because they were not willing to be separated from their falsehood. God's Word was trying to remove the falsehood from their lives, but they were unwilling.

In accordance with good Lutheran practice, we never speak less than the truth or back peddle on law or Gospel. However, we also realize that there is a natural progression in accordance with a person's need. "If someone is caught in a sin, restore them gently..." The first time we see falsehood, we may give a gentle rebuke and encouragement. If the first response is to cling to sin, we allow time for the Word to work. If the person continues to hold to falsehood, we explain quite clearly the dangers of unrepentance. If the member continues we might give a severe warning, "If you don't return to God's house..., you will be lost." Finally,

after repeated rejection of God's Word, we must say, "Your unrepentance and failure to cling to the Word, has separated you from Christ."

What was most upsetting to me about the responses to our state of confession and effort to return our Synod to the truth was not the clinging to falsehood. I knew that 1/3 of the synod supported these false teachings. It was not the 1/3 in the middle who had never heard. It was the refusal of the so-called "conservative" 1/3 who spoke big when among other "conservatives" and maybe even when at meeting away from the congregation, but their members were not being taught.

If the people do not know the errors and the great dangers which they bring, how can they respond appropriately? After we had come to the end of six years of work and we're getting ready to vote on severing our synodical membership, one of the members came up to me and said, "From what you have taught me, I know that these things are wrong and I know we must separate from error, lest our public confession make us guilty." I smiled. Then they said, "If our congregation does not vote to leave, but votes not to separate from falsehood, I don't know where we will go to church, but our family cannot continue to be members of Trinity." The troubled look on my face said it all. He was right, and I had taught him. We cannot take away the opportunity to show forth the truth of God by our practice. Thankfully, the Lord brought us out of synodical membership with very few who left clinging to the falsehood.

When speaking the truth and separating from error do not go hand-in-hand, it is the equivalent of faith without works. James calls that a dead faith. Truth without action is a dead truth. In other words, it is just a preference, not really the truth. When the truth is not practiced that is the point at which final separation occurs. Why? Because when falsehood is no longer being combated but is tolerated and given equal right with the truth, then casual error has become unrepentant error.

<u>Example</u>.--As simple as it sounds, the Scriptural way of dealing with false teaching and false practice begins when false teaching and false practice arise. If the trumpet is not sounded at the beginning to prepare for putting truth into practice, then the people won't be ready. The refusal to practice the truth in the beginning is an unclear trumpet call which will confound all practice from there on. Sometimes, we don't even realize our inconsistent message.

After separating from the LCMS, I attended an LCMS congregation while on vacation with my LCMS parents. The LCMS pastor and I had talked repeatedly and I knew that we agreed concerning the Synodical false teaching and false practice. This dear friend had told me that he was working with his congregation but they would not budge. He no longer has any contact with his circuit, and he would leave the heterodox LCMS in a heartbeat, if he could. Before the service, the pastor invited my family and me to commune, and we refused.

Let me read the communion statement from the bulletin:

"Scripture tells us that before we take the Lord's Supper we should examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:27-28). Scripture makes clear that we can take Communion to our judgment (1 Cor. 11:29). Scripture also makes clear that in Communion a public testimony is being given that the communicant believes the teachings of the altar he or she communes at are faithful to the Word of God. When we come to the altar at Whatever Lutheran Church we are publicly proclaiming that we believe that the teachings of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are faithful to the Word of God, and that we are one with each other in doctrine and practice (Cor. 1:10, 10:17 & Romans 16:17).

We practice "Closed Communion" wherein we believe that only those who are "one" with us in doctrine and practice should attend Holy Communion here, because Communion proclaims a unity of faith. This does not imply that those of another Christian confession of faith are not true believers. It does mean that we at Whatever Lutheran Church take doctrine and practice

seriously and that we believe that we should be one, before we publicly proclaim that we are one."

Although, I think it is a fine communion statement of what Scripture teaches, it is the application with which I disagree. I don't believe that the LCMS is faithful to the Word of God. Furthermore, I know that the pastor has told me that he personally doesn't believe the LCMS to be faithful to the Word of God. I had just come from Bible class in which he said, "The LCMS is heterodox." And I know that this pastor really does want to take God's Word seriously. His bulletin announcement explains the way it should be for a congregation and its synod. But it's not. I can't receive the Lord's Body and Blood at that altar just because of what Scripture teaches.

It has taken me a while to think this through. Should the pastor take this statement away? No, that would be to hide the truth. Should he leave it as it is? No, it's a lie. I think he should change the statement to this:

"Scripture tells us that before we take the Lord's Supper we should examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:27-28). Scripture makes clear that we can take Communion to our judgment (1 Cor. 11:29). Scripture also makes clear that in Communion a public testimony is being given that the communicant believes the teachings of the altar he or she communes at are faithful to the Word of God and are one with each other in doctrine and practice (Cor. 1:10, 10:17 & Romans 16:17).

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has approved false teachings and false practices and refuses to discipline the same. Because of Whatever Lutheran Church's membership in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, we are publicly proclaiming that we believe those false teachings and false practices. At present, we are not following God's Word, but are communing with falsehood. We are not practicing "Closed Communion" according to the Scriptures, but are pretending that there is a unity in Scriptural teaching, when there is not.

Whenever we got to the prayers, I heard a petition asking the Lord, "to keep our congregation and synod faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions...."

Now I don't know if he wrote this prayer or got it from the LCMS Commission on Worship and didn't really think about it. After the 2004 Convention we prayed,

"Give our people the wisdom to discern the false teaching that was approved at our Synodical Convention this summer. Through our neglect in teaching the Word of God and the lack of discipline among our pastors, you gave us over to our own desires. Do not abandon us now, but use this crisis to awaken your pastors and people to the importance of the true faith in Jesus Christ. Bring our Synodical President, Gerald Kieschnick and Atlantic District Pres., David Benke, to repentance. Bring healing to our Synod so that we repent of our lack of attention and trust in the Word."

Later on during our state of confession, we prayed,

"Give clear minds to the pastors and people of our Synod, so that we return to the pure teaching and practice of your Holy Word. Use this crisis to bring healing so that we can once again walk together in unity."

<u>Conclusion</u>.--At the beginning of this paper, I spoke about the Augsburg Confession and explained the *satis est* of AC VII. One of the reasons I used this example is because many see June 25, 1530 as THE point of separation. Those who acknowledge the presently approved false doctrine and false practice but are not yet ready to say, "*Satis iam*," seem to be waiting for that future "Augsburg Confession" day. On that day, confessional Lutherans will be forced into making a decision for the Church and then they will make their good confession.

By the time the Lutherans had arrived in Augsburg, there was already a separation in fellowship. Charles own invitation acknowledged "the division and separation in the holy faith and the Christian religion." Even before Charles arrived there are several letters which speak about how the Emperor is going to put a stop to the Lutheran preaching. When Charles finally arrived in Augsburg on June 15, the Lutheran princes shook hands and welcomed the Emperor.

However, when Cardinal Lorenzo Campegio, the papal legate assigned to the Diet, took the opportunity to bless the group, "all knelt except Elector John and Landgrave Philip." The Lutherans would not participate in the Catholic services, but held separate Lutheran services. When the Emperor demanded that it stop, Margrave George said, "Before I would deny my God and His Gospel, I would rather kneel down here before Your Imperial Majesty and let you cut off my head." When there was a Corpus Christi Procession the next day, the Lutheran princes did not participate. On June 18, Charles "urged them all to attend Mass on June 20, after which they would seek a solution to their problems." In order to try to appease the Lutherans, the Emperor "ordered that Catholic preaching be stopped and only Scripture reading permitted." However, "The hopes for a peaceful settlement were severely rocked when the Protestant princes attended Mass as requested, but refused to enter into the service" (Luther and His Times, E.G. Schwiebert, p. 725-726).

When Augsburg Confession, article VII said, "And to the true unity of the Church it is enough (*satis est*) to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments," the *satis est* was not an agenda item for future Lutheran practice. The Lutherans were already practicing this doctrine at the Diet of Augsburg and would continue to believe, teach and confess it.

It is only by the speaking of the truth, that God's people can know the different between truth and falsehood. There really is no way to follow the truth of God's Word without separation from falsehood. Keeping quiet is not a model of churchmanship, it is unfaithfulness to God's Word. I have found that some who want to know the *satis iam*, are really asking when in the future that they have to speak the truth. Thus, as I see it, when pastors and people see false doctrine and practice as a future problem, they have already given up the *satis est*. And when you refuse to return to the *satis est*, then it is *satis iam*.

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