

**WHY SHOULD A
LUTHERAN NOT JOIN ANY
SECTARIAN CHURCH?**

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Why Should a Lutheran Not Join Any Sectarian Church?

ANSWERED BY

REV. V. W. RICHTER

Read Before and Approved by the Pastoral Conference of
Livingston County, Illinois.

*MOTTO: Through Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore
I hate every false way.---Ps. 119:104.*

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PREFACE.

No harm is intended, much less done to you, kind reader, nor to anyone; for we come to you in the spirit of fairness. We are here to show by comparison the various teachings of denominations from their own writings, and compare them with the Scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran Church. The basis for all arguments is, that the Bible in its every word and letter, all Scripture, II. Tim. 3:16, is inspired by God, therefore **not capable of any error**. As such it is above, and cannot be corrected by human tradition, scientific research and human opinion in general. It is not our object to enumerate all heresies ever hatched, nor to note every shade of error within the various church bodies now existing, but to examine on the most generally accepted, and therefore most conspicuous false teachings now in vogue.

We wish distinctly to render a service, not only to those that were reared in the Lutheran faith and wish to guard against "backsliding," but to every earnest seeker after the truth. We are convinced that **only a close and careful investigation** of existing differences in doctrine will satisfy such a person. In fact, we wish to be understood as offering peace, not by setting aside the differences, but by submitting them to the proper court of appeals. And we heartily believe that all those differing from distinctly Lutheran teaching, do not believe that part of their tenets which is not Lutheran, for two reasons: First, because any tenet not based on Scripture cannot be an object of faith. Faith as distinguished from superstition or illusion, grasps a clearly revealed knowledge of Bible facts. Again, because every Christian at heart will **give and ascribe all glory to God** for his salvation, as does the Lutheran Church.

May the good Lord bless these efforts to convince a goodly number of the fact that the Lutheran Church remains in the Word of Christ, where others fail to do so, and that every one is bidden not "to err concerning the faith," I. Tim. 6:20-21, but "to be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him," Peter 3 : 15.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

It was with a great pleasure and spiritual gain that I have listened to the readings of this work while it was presented at our conference. While at this work, our dear brother, the author, encountered many obstacles and hardships, for a task like he undertook is indeed a very hard one. But we, the members of conference, always encouraged him to brace up, and bid him to proceed. And he did proceed, and splendidly so indeed.

The merit of this book does not need to be any too much propounded by any one, as it speaks for itself. To a sincere Lutheran it will be a true companion throughout life, showing him the right and the wrong, leading him into the Bible, and pointing him to the straight and narrow path that leads to true Triune God and salvation.

Now, was a book of this kind a necessity? The tendency of our age is to combine all the different Christian denominations—at least the Protestant. Accordingly, some one will say: "What's the use of arousing Christian against Christian? Work together; forget the differences." Now, if all Christians would accept and adopt the true Christian doctrine, as it is given in the Bible, we would say: Very well, we will work together. But as long as perverted human reason obscures and perverts the true teaching of the Bible, so long we, who have it in its purity, must defend it by live words and writings, and that is what the author does in this book.

Briefly, the book is up to date, very much of need, and it deserves to gain a fast foothold among our American Lutherans, not English only, but among all other tongues. Therefore I asked the author to kindly allow me to translate it into some foreign tongues—specially into Slovak language. He consented, and I will do the translations, for to do so is worth while.

May the good Lord pour his abundant blessing on this, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

REV. ANDREW CHOVAN,

Editor of Svedok, Official Organ of Slovak Luth. Synod.

The Question is asked, "Why should a Lutheran not join a Sectarian Church?" Here is one answer:

CHAPTER I.

A Lutheran should not join any Sectarian Church, first, because the Lutheran Church is the old original Church.

1. She has the same teachings as were taught by the apostles and prophets. She has **not begun in 1517**, but is the restored old apostolic Church. There were those who indeed founded sects, changing plain Bible truths to suit themselves. Not so Luther. He was the blessed tool in God's hand to clean out of the Church the mess of Roman Catholic heresies, and to restore her to the shape she once had in the time of the apostles. The good that had been left within the Church he therefore retained casting off only that which had been introduced contrary to the Word of God. Nor was he the first one to attempt this. As often as errors had crept in, and had begun to spread, there were some to testify against them. Especially when the Church was most corrupted there were those who tried to reform. But the very ones that tried to lead the Church back to Christ's Word were persecuted. Thus History tells us of a John Hus, a Savonarola, a Wyclef, and others. With an iron hand the Roman Catholics had downed every one that had voiced a protest against their many outrages, until, by the grace of God, through the pen of Luther, Rome's power was overthrown, the Gospel again had its free course, the Word was once more, as of old, preached in its truth and purity.

To show that the Lutheran Church **never aimed to be anything new**, but that her faith is the ancient Christian faith, she numbers among her confessions of faith the three Ecumenic Creeds, the Apostolic, the Nicene and the Athanasian Creed. Thus she professes the same true **Christian teaching** as it has ages ago been drawn up in a

clear, sound reasoning from the Word of God against the perversions of heretics. (Formula of Concord, Decl.) The Lutheran Church, as did the apostolic church, recognizes the written Word of the apostles and prophets as **the only and complete source, standard and rule of all Christian teaching**, she accepts and believes all of the Word of God, as did the other, not soliciting the opinion of others. All those that try to persuade her of the contrary she asks, Show me where it is written, and answers them, Thus it is written. To the one as to the other the chief and paramount issue is the doctrine of Christ and of justification, both determine not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, I. Cor. 2:2. Both rigidly distinguish the Law from the Gospel, rightly dividing the word of truth, II. Tim. 2:15. Both understand the difference between the old Covenant and the New, between the Old Testament and the New; they are aware that they are no more under tutors and governors, Gal. 4:2, and that now no one may with Scriptural reasons judge them in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, Col. 2:16. Neither will suffer to be entangled with the yoke of bondage, Gal. 5:1; their ministers must not speak by commandment, II. Cor. 8:8. Both maintain that the kingdom of grace is "not of this world," John 18:36, and that therefore the "weapons of warfare" in the Church "are not carnal," II. Cor 10:4. Both stand that test of all teaching: the "giving all glory to God," Isa. 42:8; Rom. 4:20; and affording to all poor sinners alike the full and undiminished consolation as purchased by Christ and in store for them.

To be consistent, we cannot look upon the Lutheran Church as being merely on a par with other visible churches. Any two churches opposing each other cannot both be correct. He who overlooks the differences is insincere. Now, whoever, will but take the trouble of comparing closely the teachings of the Lutheran Church with those of other churches, and has been convinced that, to use the words of Duke William of Bavaria, spoken to Dr. Eck at Augsburg: "the Lutherans are settled in, and others aside, of the Scriptures," he cannot but say that the Lutheran Church is **the only one making good its claim of being the true visible Church**. Or has any one at any time

with sound reasons from the Scriptures proved her to be mistaken? We look for such a one in vain. And now, to be consistent, the Lutheran Church must declare all those to be heretics that are, and insist upon being, aside of the Scriptures. She must keep away from them, "reject them," "avoid them," Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16:17. **We do not say that all, or that only Lutherans will be saved, for there are many confessing with their mouths only, and again, there are many within other churches that cling to such remnants of the Word of God as they get, and would drop wrong notions, if given the right kind of instruction; their "eyes would be opened," as were those of Cleopas and Luke, ch. 24:31, if the Scriptures are opened to them.**

2. And we will give yet another proof that the Lutheran Church is the old Apostolic Church. Both saw the necessity of and regarded the Lord's command to "give account of our faith," I. Pet. 3:15. They showed their colors. There was no thought of them "bidding God's speed." II. John 10, to those and mingling in any form of divine worship with those that did not commit themselves as to what they believed. It did not matter to the Roman Catholics throughout the Middle Ages just what the people believed, they kept them in ignorance. Next in the course of time to the Athanasian Creed there were no statements of faith amongst the Catholics, nor amongst the many Reformed Churches, but the Lutheran confessions of faith are the oldest. Others followed. Besides, to this day all churches more or less lose sight of the importance and necessity of statements of faith, all but the Lutheran Church. Some have confessions, but do not ask any unqualified subscription to the same; others consider statements of faith a ballast and a remnant of the dark ages. Strange to say, these same people do not consider the laws of the country a nuisance. If public officers break their oath, or perform their duties according to their own good pleasure, they are forced from office. And should only the Church allow liberties to its officers, to teach and live contrary to her principles and still keep the unfaithful stewards in office? Indeed, the Church has

vastly more important issues at stake than the government has at any time, for she watches for the souls as one that must give account. It may be worthy of note, that the Lutheran Church, because she remains loyal to her statements of faith, has had the largest increase in numbers, 115 per cent, in the last twenty years, according to Dr. Carroll, where others have been at a standstill.

3. There is still another reason for this loyalty to the confessions of faith. Both the Apostolic Church and the Lutheran Church consider the Bible as a **fixed standard for faith and life for all times to come**. There is **no room, nor necessity, for any improvement** in what the Lord has ordained to be; the word that He has spoken shall judge at the last day, John 12:48. **No new revelations or teachings** are to be expected. Those that do not want to be hemmed in by confessions of faith, so as to develop new thought, these people **expect new thought really not of the Spirit of God, but of their own mind, for which they want the liberty of making a religion up to the standard of their own knowledge**. They do not, then, so much fight the symbols or statements of faith as they fight the divine statements of God; instead of enriching their own knowledge from the Scriptures they **replace the teachings of Holy Writ by inventions of their own mind**. And as far as this is permitted, the Church will not be united, but split all the more. The Lutheran Church has always stood for union, as did the old apostolic Church, but this union can only be brought about by "bringing into captivity" our reason under the Word of God, II. Cor. 10:5.

Now this is just what Sectarians fail to do, and, consequently, we have as many other reasons to warn against them as there are Church bodies among them. We will put the various Catholic Church bodies at the head of the list. We ask: