

Why We Left Lutheranism

By Claude A. Guild

Martin Luther said: "I pray you leave my name alone and not to call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine: I have not been crucified for any one...How does it then benefit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with all of them; and let us call ourselves only Christians, after Him from whom our doctrine comes." (Life of Luther, by Michelet, p. 262). "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." (Rom. 10:1,2).

It is with deepest love and tenderness toward those who still remain in Lutheranism that I publish this book. I know their sincerity and honesty. Still I learned that I was honestly mistaken. Most of my friends in the Lutheran church are honest and making an effort to gain heaven but do lack a knowledge of their doctrine and the teachings of the Bible. Most Lutherans read for the minister, learn by memory the articles of the catechism before the day of confirmation, but have never laid the Bible side by side with the catechism and made a careful comparison.

I am not a Lutheran today; a host of friends and all of my immediate family are with me, away from the catechism. We make a comparison in this book between the teaching of the Bible and the Lutheran church. Listed here are reasons why I gave up Lutheranism and why I cannot be a Lutheran today.

1. Foundation Human not Divine

First, may I say, I gave up Lutheranism because I learned it had a human foundation. The student of the Bible and history never read or heard of a Lutheran church before the days of a man by the name of Martin Luther. In fact, the Lutheran church dates back to the eve of "All Saints Day, Oct. 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the cathedral door of the Wittenberg church and fled for his life. The blow he struck the Catholic church that day led to the beginning of the reformation movement and the origin of another church, the Lutheran church.

This institution, contrary to the wishes of Martin Luther, wears his name. It is a known fact he is the founder of the church. Since he founded it and it wears his name, he being a human being, makes the foundation of the Lutheran church human.

I looked at the Bible! There I read Ephesians 1:22,23, "...And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." I learned that Christ is the head of the New Testament church. Jesus declared He was the founder of it. "Upon this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18). Paul, the Apostle, says Christ is the foundation of the church. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 3:11).

If, 1500 years before Lutheranism, Jesus said He would build His church, and Paul said He was head and foundation of the church, what right does Luther or his followers have to build a church and stake its claim on Divinity? The truth about it is, Christ is still head and foundation of the church and not Luther.

2. Unscriptural Name

When God's word was preached in New Testament times it made sinners Christians. "And that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). And Agrippa said to Paul, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." And Paul said, "I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear

me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:28-29). "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (I Peter 4:16). The word of God believed and obeyed did not make people Lutherans. It is imperative then, that it takes something in addition to the word of God to make Lutherans.

The followers of Luther have accepted his name for the church, the Lutheran Church, because they have subscribed to his doctrine, his catechism. The catechism was written by him in the year 1529. It has continuously been accepted by the church. But let me say, if you were to destroy all the catechisms, you would forever lose sight of the name "Lutheran." Since it was not a Bible name, and because Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17), I cannot be a Lutheran.

3. They Walk By a Man-made Creed

Like most Lutheran children, I was schooled from the catechism. My mother was zealous to see all her children confirmed. To meet the question asked by the minister before the congregation on the day of the confirmation, you must know the articles in the catechism. We were taught that the catechism would explain the Bible and make it possible for us to understand the Bible. Mr. W.E. Schramm says so: "It is intended as a help to study and understand the Bible. It is a systematic arrangement of Bible teachings. Because these doctrines are presented in groups, they are easy to lay hold of, and thus the word of study simplified." ("What Lutherans Believe," The Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus, Ohio, p. 14). In the same book My Schramm says, "To aid in the study of God's Word, many Christians make use of a smaller handbook called a Catechism" (W. L. B. p. 13).

In investigating the Bible I found inspired men saying the Bible was all-sufficient and complete. "Every scripture of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Timothy 3:16,17).

To take the position Lutherans take, as expressed by Mr. Schramm, that we need Dr. Martin Luther's catechism to understand the Bible, challenges the intelligence of God. Think of it! God is the author of the Bible. Still it is necessary for a man by the name of Luther to explain what God wanted to explain. Too, God says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God" (II Timothy 2:15). If God intended for the command "to study" to have an aid, He would have legislated thus. But, be it remembered, God's commands need no crutch or cane to aid them. If they were needed He would have told us so. I could not subscribe to the Bible and to the catechism, hence another reason why I left the Lutheran church.

4. Upholds Denominationalism

The Lutherans teach there is "one church" but that it is made up of various communions - Methodist, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, etc. "The word 'church' is commonly used to designate the various divisions in the communion of saints. We speak of the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church, and a host of others. In a book entitled, 'The Religious Forces of the United States', an official of our government has listed forty-two general Christian denominations besides a number of smaller independent bodies. Yet, strictly speaking, there is not that number of Christian churches. THESE FIGURES INDICATE RATHER THE DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS INTO WHICH THE ONE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS DIVIDED...These different denominations exist because of differences in their doctrines" (W. L. B. by Schramm, p. 114).

Lutherans would have the church of the Lord divided into various denominations but when I consult Paul, the Apostle, see what he says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgement. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is

Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised into the name of Paul?" (I Corinthians 1:10-13).

During the time of inspired men there were no institutions such as the Lutheran, Methodist, Catholic and Presbyterian churches. In fact, there were none of the denominations of today. The church you read about in the Bible is the Lord's church.

The word "church" is used in two senses in the Bible; the universal and the local sense (Matthew 16:16 and I Corinthians 1:2). In speaking of the "called out" in every nation the word church was used meaning the church universally. If a writer referred to the church in a given community it meant the local congregation. Never can we read of different denominations, having different founders, doctrines and creeds.

To believe in denominationalism would be to make "sport" of Jesus' prayer in John 17:20,21: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be ONE; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me." Jesus prayed for oneness. Paul said, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4). He declared the body was the church (Ephesians 1:22).

Attention must be drawn to inspiration again when Paul declared, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17). The attitude that we can have different doctrines is contrary to Truth. Christ said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18) not churches. He said "there is one fold," not folds (John 10:16). Paul said, "there is one faith," not "the faith of your choice." (Ephesians 4:5).

5. Misapply and Violate the 10 Commandments

The Lutheran church teaches we are to keep the ten commandments today. It doesn't matter if you are a Jew or Gentile, the ten commandments are binding on you in this age. "What is the moral law?" Answer: "The moral law is that law which sets forth our duties to God and man, as briefly comprehended in the ten commandments" (Questions & Answers No. 21, Luther's Small Catechism) "The moral law alone is binding on all men." (Answer No. 21, L.S.C.)

The ten commandments were "written and engraven in stones," they are done away. "But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth. For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory. (II Corinthians 3:7-11).

The ten commandments are called a covenant and the covenant is abolished. "And he declared unto you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone." (Deuteronomy 4:13). "But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt...In that he saith, A new covenant he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (Hebrews 8:6-13). "...Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross;

having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's" (Colossians 2:14-17).

Question: If the ten commandments are binding today, why don't Lutherans keep the sabbath, the 7th day, as the day of rest? Without divine authority they have called Sunday the sabbath and worship on Sunday. There is no passage in all the Bible that would warrant the change - Sunday for the Sabbath.

When I make a comparison between the catechism and the Bible I find they teach we must keep the commandments but like the Catholics they leave completely out of their catechism the second commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto me a graven image" (Exodus 20:4). To make up for the one they leave out, they divide number ten into two parts and call it nine and ten. (See L. S. C. pp. 43-44).

This is the most serious part of all of it. They leave out one commandment and never keep the Sabbath commandment. They conclude the commandments thus: "God threatens to punish all those who transgress these commandments. We should, therefore, dread his displeasure, and not act contrarily to these commandments. 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments?' " (L. S. C. pp. 44-45) When I learned they violated the ten commandments, left one out and even bound on us a law that was abolished, I could not longer be a Lutheran.

6. The Mode of Baptism is Non-essential

"We recognise any mode of Baptism in which water is applied in the name of the Triune God, whether it be by immersion or pouring or sprinkling." (Mr. Schramm, W. L. B. p. 136).

The mode of baptism and especially sprinkling was the one paramount doctrine that continuously disturbed us. If sprinkling was to be "applied in the name of Triune God," there must be some passage of scripture for it. We searched the Bible from lid to lid and never found "modes of baptism" mentioned nor did we read about baptism by sprinkling and pouring. However, we did find that Christ was baptised "in" Jordan and "came up out of the water" (Mark 1:9-10). Christ called baptism "a birth" (John 3:5). Those baptised "went down into the water" and "came up out of the water" (Acts 8:36-39).

We never became wholly dissatisfied with sprinkling until we read Romans 6:4-5. "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father we might also walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him (King James Version says "planted") in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Too, we could no longer believe there might be a choice of three modes of baptism when Paul said, "there is one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

After many days of anxiety and searchings, having found nothing in the Bible that would teach sprinkling, we decided that it wasn't baptism at all. We found a gospel preacher and were baptised-"buried"-for the remission of our sins. This I would plead with every Lutheran to do.

7. Infant Baptism

Mr. Schramm states the Lutheran position well: "The baptismal command includes children. The command reads: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, R. V.). Since children are part of every nation, they are evidently among the ones to be discipled and baptised." (W. L. B. p. 139) It would have been informing if Mr. Schramm had stated what it would have taken to make a disciple. It adds light on the subject if we read the King

James Version: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations," (Matthew 28:19). Mark gives the great commission thus: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). From Matthew and Mark we learn that two prerequisites of discipleship are "being taught" and "believing." In Acts 2:38 another prerequisite is given - "Repent and be baptised." Hence, to be scripturally baptised one must be old enough to be taught, he must believe and repent of his sins. Surely babies at the age of eight days are not old enough to be taught, to accept Christ or repent. Again, we cannot be Lutherans and believe in infant baptism.

Lutherans teach baptism takes the place of circumcision in the Old Testament. "In the Old Testament, circumcision was the sacrament of initiation. It was administered to the boy babies when they were eight days of age. If God could make a covenant with a baby in the Old Testament, certainly He can and does do the same thing in this new dispensation. Accordingly, we conclude that since baptism has taken the place of circumcision, babies should be baptised" (W. L. B. p. 141). This like a lot of other vital issues isn't a question of what God could and should do, but what He has willed to do! If God didn't legislate baptism in the place of circumcision we act without divine authority when we baptise babies. This question has never been answered by Lutheran ministers: If baptism takes the place of circumcision, and they say it does, only boy babies were circumcised; why do the Lutherans baptise the girl babies?

8. Inherited Damnation

The Lutherans teach that every baby born into this world inherits the guilt of Adam's sin and is wholly depraved when conceived. "Original sin is the depravity which is born in us; it is the inclination to evil which we and all men have inherited from our parents. Ever since the fall of Adam, all men who are naturally begotten are conceived and born in sin" (W. L. B. p. 65). We suffer today from Adam's sin, but there is not passage in the Bible that would teach that we inherit the guilt of Adam's transgression. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

Can the Lutherans tell us if the guilt of Adam's sin comes from the fleshly or spiritual make-up of our foreparents? If they should say, "the flesh", it would necessarily make Jesus a sinner because "he became flesh" and was born of flesh (John 1:14; II Corinthians 5:16; Colossians 1:22). If our original sin is from foreparent's spirit, it would make God a sinner because "He is the Father of our spirits" (Hebrews 12:9).

Men who teach inherited sin can never successfully do so when folks have read the inspired statement from Ezekiel the prophet. "The soul that sinneth it shall die; THE SON SHALL NOT BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHER, NEITHER SHALL THE FATHER BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE SON; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20). Sin is transgression of the law (I John 3:4). Until babies are old enough to know the law and transgress the same, there is not transgression and they are children of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14).

9. Misinformed Us On the Lord's Supper

The Lutherans teach the doctrine of consubstantiation; that with and under the bread is the body and with and under the cup is the blood. Let us read again from Mr. Schramm: The Roman Catholic View: "The Church of Rome teaches that in this sacrament the communicate receives only the body and blood of the saviour. They believe that when the priest consecrates the earthly elements in the Lord's supper, they cease to be bread and wine and by a sort of miracle are changed into the body and blood of Christ."

The Lutheran View: "We Lutherans insist that both the bread and wine and the body and blood of Jesus are received by every communicant at the Lord's Supper." (W. L. B. p. 149) "With and under the bread, with and under the cup, is the real body and blood of the Lord" (L. S. C. pp. 137-140).

The reason Catholics and Lutherans teach that the real body and blood of the Lord appears in the supper is because Jesus said, "this is my body," "this is my blood." (Matthew 26:26-28) If Jesus meant that it literally became His body and blood, what did Jesus mean in John 10:9, "I am the door?" Did He mean He was made out of two-by-fours and one-by-twelve's? Most assuredly not! What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the true vine," that He was literally planted and leafed out in the Spring? It would have to mean this if the other is literal in regard to the Lord's supper.

The truth about it is, though the Catholics teach "transubstantiation" and say it actually becomes His body and blood, though the Lutherans teach "consubstantiation" and make a sandwich out of it and say, "with and under" both have failed to see the figure of speech, personification. Jesus simply personified His body and blood in the bread and cup, as He did Himself in John 10 and John 15. The Lutheran church is divided on this very issue and we were never able to see their teaching on it, in the light of these other passages.

10. Confession to the Pastor

Absolution of sins, or forgiveness of sins comes to the disciple of Luther when he confesses his sins before the pastor and receives forgiveness for the same, as though God Himself had forgiven him: "What is Confession? Answer. Confession consists of two parts: the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness through the pastor as of God himself, in no wise doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven" (L. S. C. p. 79).

There is no substitute with God. There is no satisfaction in confession sins before anyone, to pardon you, but God. There is one who will pardon us. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). John said, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, (not the pastor) Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1).

Friend of mine, Jesus purchased the "church of the Lord" with His blood, (Acts 20:28). I just can't be persuaded to believe, no matter how hard I try, that He meant the "Lutheran church" when He said "church of the Lord." Jesus has only one body which is His church (Ephesians 1:22). If you will read your Bible you will learn that you must believe in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), and be baptised (buried) into Christ, for the remission of sins (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:4; Acts 2:38). You will be added to the church of Jesus Christ, not a human institution (Acts 2:47). Just be a Christian (I Peter 4:16). To do less than this, or to join some human denomination is acting without divine authority (II John 9).

Our thanks eternally will go to Brother J.C. Bailey, Radville, Sask., an humble gospel preacher, who lead us into the church of Christ, and out of a human church (a denomination) where we had fears and endless questions in our minds. We subscribe to no creed but the Bible now and are a happy people. We are anxious to see others become just Christians and Christians only. This is our humble prayer for you.