

LECTURES ON THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH THE TRUE VISIBLE CHURCH OF GOD
ON EARTH by Dr. F. Pieper.²³

**FOURTH LECTURE: The Written Word of God is the Sole and Only Sufficient Source and Norm,
Standard and Rule of all Christian Doctrine and Practice, Faith and Life.**

(continued from *Morsels From The Saviour* August-September 2013)

Since the Fall of man into sin no one knows by himself how he can be saved. That a *total ignorance* rules amongst the people in regard to this matter, is shown in this way, that when they try to draw from their own wisdom, they completely take an altogether wrong way to salvation, namely, the way of works. But in His grace God has taken mercy on the human race; He has given mankind, groping about in the dark, a revelation, and this Revelation is placed before the human race in the written Word of the Apostles and Prophets in Holy Scripture.



BIBLE PROOF

But God, who has now given mankind this Revelation, has **bound** mankind strictly to it. God now also impresses upon people that *in spiritual things* they teach and believe no more and no less than that which is written in the Scriptures. **“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it,”** He says in Deut 4:2; and again: **“Keep and do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, that ye turn not aside there-from to the right hand or to the left,”** Joshua 23:6. God also now impresses upon people that they should obtain spiritual knowledge from **no other source** than His written Word. Therefore Scripture says to mankind: **“To the Law and to the Testimony²⁴: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them²⁵,”** Isaiah 8:20. **“They have Moses and the prophets²⁶; let them hear them,”** Luke 16:29. God also now impresses upon people that His Revelation, as it is placed before us in Holy Scripture is a **perfect, sufficient** source of knowledge and standard of all Christian doctrine in spiritual matters. He says of His Word that it is able to make us wise unto salvation, that it also makes perfect²⁷ a man of God²⁸, fitted out for every good work²⁹ (2 Tim 3:15-17).

²³ **Dr. F. Pieper** (1852- 1931) delivered these lectures to the entire student body of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in the so-called “Lutherstunden” or **Luther Hours**. He followed a tradition started by Dr. Walther. On September 4, 1885 **Dr. Walther** stated: “We call these Friday evening lectures, which form, as it were, the conclusion of the week’s instruction, ‘Luther Hours,’ chiefly because in these lectures I let our beloved father Luther, the God-appointed Reformer and the common teacher of our church, speak to you.” (Walther, “Law and Gospel,” p. 344). In these lectures Dr. Pieper deals with significant points found in Walther’s outstanding book, “The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth,” and further explains them to his audience. This particular series began on Nov. 31, 1889 and was completed on June 12, 1891.

²⁴ These words mean: “Turn back to the Word of God as it is divided into Law and Gospel.”

²⁵ According to the Hebrew, Kretzmann gives the correct meaning for the words, **“There is no light in them,”** as: **“The dawn of salvation will not arise for them.** He who sets aside, ignores, rejects, the Word of God *destroys himself, has no hope for time and for eternity.*” (emphasis added).

²⁶ These words refer to the written Word of God as it is divided into Law and Gospel.

²⁷ The Greek means “spiritually complete” so that every Christian, and especially every Christian teacher, lives up to the requirements of his office and station according to God’s will.

THE ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH RECOGNISES THE BIBLE AS THE SOLE STANDARD OF DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE, FAITH AND LIFE.

Therefore, then that church body is only a church body as *it should be* or an *orthodox church body* which recognises the Holy Scriptures, or the written Word of the Prophets and Apostles as the sole and sufficient source and norm³⁰ of all Christian doctrine. The Apostle says of the Church that it is “**built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets**” (Eph.2:20), which means: the Church in its belief is based solely and alone on the **WORD, the inspired Word** of the Apostles and Prophets. In so far as a church body does not do this, in so far as it draws from another source of knowledge or makes human words or thoughts the basis of its doctrine and its faith, just so far has this church body *fallen away* from the foundation which God has given to the Church, just so far is it not a true church, but a sect.

HUMAN REASON IS IN NO WAY THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND LIFE.

Therefore the *Reformed* church is not an orthodox church. Although they also say this in general that Holy Scripture is the source and norm of all their teachings, but in fact, in certain doctrines, they **use human reason in place of the Scripture** -- for example, in the doctrines of the Person of Christ and of the Lord's Supper.

In the doctrine of the **Person of Christ** the Reformed teachers deny the communication of attributes with the philosophical axiom: “**The finite is not capable of the infinite**”³¹. When now Holy Scripture clearly says: “**The Word**³² **became flesh**” (John 1:14), and, “**In Him**³³ **dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily**” (Col. 2:9), the Reformed teachers continue to say: “**The finite is not capable of the infinite.**” Against the real presence of Christ's true body and blood in the Holy Supper, the Reformed teachers bring up the philosophical axiom: “**Each true body is visibly and physically present at one place.**”³⁴ Therefore, if there is no local and visible presence of the body of Christ, then the body of Christ is not present at all.

Now though Scripture says as much as it does that in the Holy Supper the bread is Christ's true body³⁵, they continue to say: “**Each true body is visibly and physically present at one place.**”³⁶ So the Reformed

²⁹ The King James Version has, “**thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**” These words in the **Greek** mean: “**Fully fitted out or equipped** toward every good work.” True believers in Christ find their greatest delight in performing the will of God, in doing such works as will please Him, to show Christ their thanks for all that He has done to redeem them.

³⁰ Standard.

³¹ The Latin reads: “**FINITUM NON EST CAPAX INFINITI.**” Here the Reformed use reason **instead of just adhering firmly to Scripture**. This principle of the Reformed may apply in **earthly matters**, for example, you cannot fit an elephant into a small matchbox, but does not apply in spiritual matters with reference to what Scripture says.

In accordance with this **false idea** they **deny the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ's true body and blood in the Lord's Supper**. They **erroneously** claim, “Since Christ's body is finite, how can it be present in the Lord's Supper when it is celebrated all over the world.” In the **first** place, they forget that **Christ is the almighty God** and He does what He says He will, whether we can understand it or not. **Secondly**, they do not accept that in the Person of Christ, His qualities according to His Divine Nature are communicated to His Human Nature, so that when Jesus said, “**Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world**” (Mat.28:20), Jesus is not only present everywhere according to His Divine Nature, but also according to His Human Nature.

So when Christ says that the moment we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Lord's Supper we receive His true body given into death for us and His true blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins, then **this is true, not only because His Word is true**, but because **He is the almighty God** and because His Divine and Human Natures are intimately united in the one Person of Christ so that His Divine Nature communicates its qualities to His Human Nature bringing about what He says in the Lord's Supper. How the doctrine of the Real Presence occurs we do not know; but that **Scriptures** clearly teaches it, is affirmed not only by the words of Christ's institution, but also by 1 Cor.10:16 and 1 Cor.11:23-29.

³² The Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity.

³³ Christ. See Col. 2:8.

teachers come to the position that in order to preserve their principle of human reason **they change the clear word of Scripture into the exact opposite**. Yes, not the humble, faithful submission to the Word of God, but **rationalism** is the characteristic of the Reformed church in so far as it differs from the Lutheran church. Several Reformed teachers have quite coarsely stated that, so, for example, Zwingli at the Colloquy³⁷ at Marburg in 1529. When it had been proven to Zwingli that **on the basis of the words of institution the true body and blood of Christ are present and are partaken of in the Holy Supper**, he then said: "God does not place before people such incomprehensible things to believe," a statement about which Melanchthon at that time indeed had been frightened in his heart. Other Reformed teachers have candidly said that human reason is at least the second or **secondary** principle in theology. The Reformed church cannot be called a sister church of the Lutheran church. That a Reformed church exists alongside the Lutheran church is not the result of a "necessary historical development," as it is expressed these days, but it is the result of this fact that the Reformed church distinguishes itself from the Lutheran church in this **that alongside of the Word of God in its teachings it makes human reason its principle of theology**. The rationalistic principle which has been introduced by the Reformed into their theology is completely developed by the Socinians³⁸, Unitarians and the new Protestants who simply say: Holy Scripture is a source and norm of theology in so far as and to the extent that it agrees with human reason.

This introduction of human reason as the source and norm of theology is condemned by God's Word *further, quite specifically*, when it says that **human reason itself then is by no means capable of understanding God's Word**, when divine Revelation was put before it. So we read in 1 Cor.1:21, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by (German has 'its') wisdom *knew not* God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"; 1 Cor.2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Apostle Paul warns explicitly against human reason being used as the source and norm of theology when he says in 1 Cor.2:4,5: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Holy Scripture says that human reason, when it is a matter of examining revealed truth, does not ask for advice, but rather *brings into captivity every thought* to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor.10:5³⁹. Yes, Scripture also says that when this does not occur we allow ourselves to be robbed of the revealed Truth by philosophy or human wisdom. Col.2:8 reads: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

NOR ARE TRADITIONS A SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Furthermore, the *Papal* church is not an orthodox church. In the first place, this church alongside of the inspired Holy Scriptures also makes the Apocrypha⁴⁰, therefore *human* books, as a source and norm of Christian doctrine. Then it quite expressly places alongside of Holy Scripture **tradition**⁴¹ as a source of

bread. **Luther** used to say that when Christ said, "Take eat; this is My body," as He handed the bread out to His disciples, that it was similar to us saying, "Take, this is money," as we hand out to a person a purse filled with money.

³⁶ Whether we can see Christ's true body and blood in, with and under bread and wine, **does not matter**; what does matter is that **Christ clearly tells us that we receive His true body and blood** when we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Sacrament. Faith clings to the Word of Christ and His almighty power.

³⁷ Debate with Luther on the Lord's Supper.

³⁸ They denied the Trinity.

³⁹ 2 Cor.10:5 reads, "**Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.**"

⁴⁰ The word "Apocrypha" means "hidden," because the Jewish believers of the Old Testament never regarded them as inspired, **nor did Christ, nor did the early New Testament Church**. After the last book of the Old Testament was completed a number of non-inspired writings arose, which the priests who had a sacred reverence for the inspired Old Testament refused to include as a part of the Scriptures. A number of false doctrines arose in them. For example, the Catholic Church takes its doctrine of purgatory from the book of Maccabees. **Dr. Luther**, together with all orthodox Lutherans, never regarded the Apocryphal books as inspired. **Luther** said, "Apocrypha--that is, books which are not

Christian doctrine. It is true that the Papal church says that also tradition is God's Word. They falsely claim it was a part of the Word of Christ and the Apostles which was transmitted verbally by tradition, a part of God's Word which God the Holy Spirit has spoken through the Councils and particularly through the popes. But we know what kind of "Word of God" that is! Papal tradition is nothing else than **human teaching**. Holy Scripture itself says that all Christian doctrine is comprised in it, that therefore it does not require any addition by a so-called tradition. What the Apostles have written is identical with what they have taught verbally, 1 John 1:3,4⁴². Therefore in regard to the Papal church the Word of God applies in Matt.15:9: "**But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**" Yes, the Papal sect as such stands exclusively, absolutely, on **human authority**. According to papal teaching the pope has the power, because of his infallibility *alone*, to interpret what appears to them *the* dark passages of Holy Scripture. As well he *alone* can also determine decisively what is true tradition and what is not. So *the pope himself* continues on as the sole source and norm of papal theology exclusively as a result of *the fabricated doctrine of the infallibility of the pope*.

NOR ARE 'NEW REVELATIONS' A SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Finally, all those who appeal to new revelations outside of and alongside of Holy Scripture and want to make these a source and norm of Christian doctrine are also not orthodox organizations. To them belong, for example, the Quakers as well as the Spiritualists who at present are talking much about themselves. Now of course these fanatics⁴³ also say that their new revelations are *God's* revelations, that God speaks in their hearts, that God lets them see visions, that God sends spirits to them in order to communicate messages to them. **But this is gross deceit!** In the first place, **Holy Scripture says quite explicitly, that all revelations about doctrine would cease with the appearance of Christ**, Haggai 2:6,7; Heb.12:26-28; John 17:20. In the second place, **Holy Scripture also warns us especially against new revelations which allegedly occur by the appearance of those who have died**. Luke 16:29 refers to that: "**They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them**" and Isaiah 8:19,20: "**To the Law and to the Testimony.**" Therefore all those who make the so-called new revelations a source and norm of theology, abandon the foundation of faith which has been given to the church.

THE POSITION OF THE ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the other hand, now, the *Lutheran* Church is an orthodox church body. This church body **rejects** all false principles and norms by which truth is obtained such as human reason and human wisdom, man-made laws and the so-called authority of the church, new revelations of the fanatics, etc., and holds fast in words and actions to this that *the written Word of the inspired Apostles and Prophets, Holy Scripture, is the sole and sufficient source and norm of all Christian doctrine*. Let us now this evening look at some proof for this that the orthodox Lutheran church holds fast to Holy Scripture as the sole source and norm of all Christian doctrine.

In the **Formula of Concord** it is stated:

"We believe, teach, and confess that the *sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone*, as it is written Ps.119:105: 'Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.' And St. Paul: 'Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed,' Gal.1:8."

"*Other writings*, however, of ancient or modern teachers, *whatever name they bear*, must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures, but all of them together be subjected to them, and should not be received otherwise or further than as *witnesses*, [which are to show] in what manner after the

⁴² 1 John 1:3,4: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and, truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto

time of the apostles, and at what places, this [pure] doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved.” (Triglotta, page 776; italicised emphasis from Pieper).

Here our church makes a distinction between Holy Scripture and *all other* human writings. We distinguish *all* human writings absolutely from this *one* Writing which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures. **Holy Scripture alone is the judge and is to be judged by no-one**; however all other books are to be subject to the Scriptures as the Judge.

For what purpose do we ourselves also appeal to *human* writings, then, in controversies over doctrine? We appeal to them, as our Confession says here, as *witnesses* to the true doctrine. We appeal to human writings **not** for the purpose of proving doctrine as divine teachings, but in order to prove that our *Confessors* have also **had these divine teachings at all times**. Also the **Schmalcald Articles** say: “The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel.” (Triglotta, page 467).

We require a *divine* foundation for our faith. However no angel and archangel can give us a divine foundation for our faith. Only in the inspired Word of **God** do we have a divine foundation for our faith. From this principle, that faith must adhere only to God’s Word, was the Reformation born.

Luther, when he was dismissed from [the Diet of] Worms solemnly, attested:

“He thanks above all his imperial majesty, the electors, and estates of the empire most humbly and obediently, and as much as he could, because they had listened to him so graciously.... For he desired *nothing else than that a reformation from the Holy Scriptures*, for which he had prayed so diligently, be undertaken and carried out; otherwise he would yield and suffer everything else for the sake of his imperial majesty and the empire, both life and death, honour and dishonour, and *that he reserved for himself nothing else than only to confess and to attest freely and only the Word of God.*” (XV,2318f.; S.L. XV, 1935; Taken from Walther T.V.C., p.53)

Indeed, Luther accepted only that as his doctrine which is identical with Scripture. It can be proven about him that whatever did not agree with the Scriptures he did not even want to recognise as his teaching, but from the outset knew to reject it as un-Lutheran.

He said in 1528: “So even Luther does not desire to *be Lutheran except he teaches Holy Scripture in its purity.*” (XXI,234; S.L. XVI, 422,426; translated in Walther T.V.C., p.53; italicised emphasis is Pieper’s).

(To be Continued.)

(Delivered on 29 NOVEMBER 1889. Headings added. Translated BLW. Proofed KKM.)

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