

# The Teachings of Christianity

## Lesson 2: The Bible: God's Word

**Augsburg Confession:** Article V - The Ministry p.33; **Luther's Small Catechism:** Questions 1-14 p.43-50

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*Does it matter whether The New Testament documents are reliable or not?* Is it so very important that we should be able to accept them as truly historical records? Some people will very confidently return a negative answer to both these questions. The fundamental principles of Christianity, they say, are laid down in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the New Testament; their validity is not affected by the truth or falsehood of the narrative framework in which they are set. Indeed, it may be that we know nothing certain about the Teacher into whose mouth they are put; the story of Jesus as it has come down to us may be myth or legend, but the teaching ascribed to him—whether he was actually responsible for it or not—has a value all its own, and a man who accepts and follows that teaching can be a true Christian even if he believes that Christ never lived at all.

This argument sounds plausible, and it may be applicable to some religions. It might be held, for example, that the ethics of Confucianism have an independent value quite apart from the story of the life of Confucius himself, just as the philosophy of Plato must be considered on its own merits, quite apart from the traditions that have come down to us about the life of Plato and the question of the extent of his indebtedness to Socrates. **But the argument can be applied to the New Testament only if we ignore the real essence of Christianity. For the Christian gospel is not primarily a code of ethics or a metaphysical system; it is first and foremost good news, and as such it was proclaimed by its earliest preachers. True, they called Christianity 'the way' and 'the life';<sup>2</sup> but Christianity as a way of life depends upon the acceptance of Christianity as good news. And this good news is intimately bound up with the historical order, for it tells how for the world's redemption God entered into history, the eternal came into time, the kingdom of heaven invaded the realm of earth, in the great events of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.<sup>1</sup>**

### New Testament Manuscript Reliability:

<https://carm.org/about-the-bible/manuscript-evidence-for-superior-new-testament-reliability/>

### The Books and the Parchments:

#### 2 Timothy 4:9, 13

<sup>9</sup>*Do your best to come to me soon.*

<sup>13</sup>*When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the **books**, and above all the **parchments**.*

But what were these books, and what were the parchments which Paul was so especially anxious to have? The Greek words that he uses to indicate them are interesting. They denote primarily the material of which the two classes of documents were made. The word for "book" is *biblion*, and that for "parchment" is *membrana*.

A *biblion* was more particularly a roll of papyrus or byblus. This was a reed plant growing beside rivers and marshes and such places, the inner bark of which was extracted and dried in flat strips. When these strips were dried, a row of them was laid side by side, and above this another row was laid in criss-cross fashion, and the two rows were gummed together. The result was a piece of writing material.

Several of these pieces could be joined together end to end so as to form a long strip which was then rolled up into a scroll of convenient size, called in Greek a *biblos* or *biblion*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2018). *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (pp. 11–12). Kingsley Books.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2018). *The Books and the Parchments: The Original Languages, the Canon, Transmission and How We Got Our English Bible* (Revised Edition, p. 3). Kingsley Books.



It is from *biblion*, in fact, that our word “Bible” is derived. The plural of *biblion* is *biblia*, and the whole collection of Old and New Testament books came to be known by Greek-speaking Christians as *ta biblia*, “the books.” Latin-speaking Christians then borrowed the word *biblia* but treated it as a singular noun, and from its Latin use the English word “Bible” and similar forms in many other languages have been derived.<sup>3</sup>

The other documents which Paul asked Timothy to bring were parchments. The Greek word here is *membrana*, a word borrowed from Latin, from which, of course, comes our English word “membrane.” This is an animal and not a vegetable product, the skin of sheep, goats, antelopes, and similar animals, which was shaved and scraped to provide a more durable writing material than papyrus. The word “parchment” comes from the name of the city of Pergamum, in Asia Minor, for the production of this writing material was at one time especially associated with that place. Parchment made from calfskin is called vellum.

In New Testament times, parchment, being more durable and more costly than papyrus, was used chiefly for documents of greater value, or for such as were constantly in use and were, therefore, exposed to greater wear and tear. What the parchments were which Paul so particularly desired Timothy to bring we cannot be sure, but it is a reasonable guess that they contained portions of Holy Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

For writing on papyrus or parchment, a pen and ink were used, as is indicated in 3 John 13, where the Elder has much to say to Gaius which he is unwilling to communicate by means of “ink and pen.” (In a similar passage in 2 John 12 the phrase “paper and ink” is used, where the Greek word for “paper” is *chartēs*, another word for papyrus.) The pen was a reed (Greek *kalamos*), pointed at the end. The ink was compounded of charcoal, gum and water; the Greek word used by John is simply *melan*, i.e. “black.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Bible Translations:** (See Olive Tree)

- **Literal Bible translations**
  - Literal translations are often the closest English form of the Hebrew or Greek word.
  - ESV, King James, New King James, NASB
- **Dynamic Bible translations**
  - Dynamic translations place a higher emphasis on summing up the biblical authors’ thoughts while still respecting the text.
  - NIV, NLT
- **Paraphrased Bible translations**
  - Attempts to tell the reader what the passage means. More of a commentary on the passage rather than an accurate rendering of the text. Theological differences will be reflected in the paraphrase.
  - The Message Bible
- **See Bible Study Tools**
  - <https://www.biblestudytools.com/parallel-bible/passage/?q=1+pete+3%3A18-23&t=msg&t2=esv>

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2018). 3.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2018). 3-4

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, F. F. (2018). *The Books and the Parchments: The Original Languages, the Canon, Transmission and How We Got Our English Bible* (Revised Edition, p. 5). Kingsley Books.

# God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions

## The Lutheran Confessions Teach what the Bible Teaches

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*The Lutheran Church differs from all other churches in being essentially **the Church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments.***<sup>6</sup>

### Confession and Doctrine

- **doctrine** - something that is taught (*Merriam Webster*) - **διδασκαλία** - ① the activity of teaching, teaching, instruction; ② the content of teaching, teaching - what is taught
- **confess** - **ὁμολογέω** - say the same thing - ② to share a common view or be of common mind about a matter, agree; ③ to concede that something is factual or true, grant, admit, confess<sup>7</sup>
- **teach a different doctrine** - **ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω** - (1 Tim 1:3) - to teach contrary to standard instruction, give divergent, i.e. divisive, instruction<sup>8</sup>
- **teach** - **διδάσκω** - ① to tell someone what to do, tell, ② to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting, teach<sup>9</sup>

**1 Timothy 6:1-4a (1:3)** <sup>3</sup>*If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,* <sup>4</sup>*he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, (Consider all of 1 Timothy 6:1).*

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup>*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* <sup>17</sup>*that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

**Romans 10:8-10** <sup>8</sup>*But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);* <sup>9</sup>*because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* <sup>10</sup>*For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

**2 Corinthians 4:13** *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak,*

**James 3:1** *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*

In our Lutheran Confessions we are saying things that God has already said. That's why we can say that "our Lutheran Confessions are without error." These aren't our own ideas or teachings/doctrines, but God's.

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<sup>6</sup> McCain, P. T., ed. (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (p. xxiii). Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>7</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 708). University of Chicago Press.

<sup>8</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000), 399

<sup>9</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000), 241

## What Are the Lutheran Confessions?

Not everything that Luther or the other Lutheran Reformers or theologians wrote is our Lutheran Confessions.

### The Lutheran Confessions:

- The Bible
- Luther's Small Catechism
- The Book of Concord
  - See "An Overview of the Book of Concord" on pages xxx-xxxiii for details of what is found in the BOC.

<https://bookofconcord.org/>

<https://steadfastlutherans.org/blog/2016/09/the-lutheran-confessions-why-do-we-still-bother/>

### Lutheran Doctrine is Not a Human Fabrication:

*Doctrine is important to Lutherans because they believe that Christian doctrine is not a human fabrication but originates in God. It is God's revealed teaching about Himself and all He has done for us in Christ. Therefore Luther says confidently and joyfully: "The doctrine is not ours but God's" (WA, 17 11, 233). And he will risk everything for the doctrine, for to compromise would do harm to God and to all the world. Luther's spirit is echoed throughout our Confessions as they affirm that their doctrine is "drawn from and conformed to the Word of God" (FC SD, Rule and Norm, 5, 10).*

*Pure Christian doctrine is important for our Lutheran Confessions because it brings eternal salvation. It "alone is our guide to salvation." For this reason our Confessions call it "heavenly doctrine" and they never fail to show and apply this saving aim of evangelical doctrine.*

<https://bookofconcord.org/other-resources/what-are-the-confessions/>

### Quia vs. Quatenus (Latin)

Lutherans insist on the "**quia**" form of subscription to the Confessions **not the "quatenus"** form of subscription.

- *quia* - "because"
  - **TRUE STATEMENT:** We are bound to the Lutheran Confessions **because (quia)** they are the doctrine (teaching) of Scripture.
- *quatenus* - "in so far as"
  - **FALSE STATEMENT:** We are bound to the Lutheran confessions "**in so far as" (quatenus)** they contain the doctrine (teaching) of Scripture.
- *Everything in our Lutheran Confessions is the teaching of Scripture. You will find nothing contained in our Lutheran Confessions that is not taught in the Bible. We don't have faith in our Lutheran Confessions, we have faith in what our Lutheran Confessions teach which is God's Word.*

It (LCMS) binds its teachers to the doctrine contained in the Confessions not because it is the doctrine of the Confessions, but because it is the doctrine of Scripture<sup>10</sup>

(If) It is said that the Confessions "offer an essentially correct" presentation "of the chief doctrines." It is left to the whim of the individual what is to be regarded as "chief doctrines" and what is "an essentially correct" presentation of these fundamental doctrines.<sup>11</sup>

✠ **John 8:31-32**

<sup>10</sup> Pieper, F. (1953). *Christian Dogmatics* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 354). Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>11</sup> Pieper, F. (1953). *Christian Dogmatics* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 355). Concordia Publishing House.