

God's Word Is the Highest Authority

The Bible Is the Word of God

We believe that the Bible is God's Word. While men have written the Scripture, they have not done so as an expression of their own will, but God has moved them by His Spirit to express His own will (2 Pet. 1:20,21; 2 Tim. 3:16). God's Word is not to be treated or regarded in the same manner as man's word but rather granted our highest esteem.—(LLC Position Statement, Section 1, Item 1)

God's Word Is Christian Faith's Highest Authority

We believe that God's Word is Christian faith's highest authority, and thus Christian faith's guiding principles and doctrine must be examined and evaluated in the light of God's Word.— (LLC Position Statement, Section 1, Item 2)

The Bible's Authority

Is the Bible God's Word? Do we believe it literally? Does it have the same authority today as when it was written? Indeed, the Bible is a familiar book, and is among the most widely printed, translated, and read books in the world. However, today the authority of the Bible is often challenged. Many see it as part writing of people and part God's inspiration, and argue that the Bible and its teachings must be adapted to our time. Questioning the authority of God's Word began already in Paradise when the serpent asked, "Did God truly say...?"

Juhani Uljas¹ writes:

An objective of the biblical discussion of the last decades has been to break down the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God by depending on so-called critical Bible research. In their studies, young people become familiar with a worldview that differs from the Bible's teachings. In this way, they come to ponder the trustworthiness of the Bible. The critique of the Scriptures has attained more favorable response than before, since the modern person is averse to any authority. He would want to determine for himself what God is like, and decide, himself, what is right and what is wrong.

God has given us His Word to help us know Him. If we do not allow the Scriptures to guide us, we will not find answers to our most basic and important questions. Above all, we will not come to know our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, God reveals himself to us, His righteousness as well as His love. We need God's Word, the Scriptures.

The Bible contains all that God has seen necessary to reveal to people. It describes God to us, His will, and what we sinful people are like. God, himself, has not written the Bible, rather people have written it as a God-given task. God, however, has been present at the origin of the Bible through the Holy Spirit: 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pet. 1:21,22). 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' (2 Tim. 3:16).

Due to the manner of its birth, the Bible also has a human side. The saints of God, who spoke and wrote the Word of God, were bound to the image of the world and the culture of their time. This

Day2L3R04_ *God's Word is the Highest Authority, Crossing the Current*

is seen also in the writings of the Scriptures. However, the divine and the human aspects are so intertwined in the Scriptures, that there is no reason to ponder what is divine and what is human in them. The Bible is the Word of God in human words. Therein He has revealed himself, His love, and His will to us.

Some people say that the Bible does not need to be interpreted so literally, nor do its teachings hold any longer, for it has originated within the sphere of the old Semitic and Hellenistic cultures. We cannot agree with these statements, if we consider the Bible to be God's Word.²

The Reformation and the Bible

"During the Reformation in the 1500s, the authority of the Scriptures became a crucial question. Luther and his friends could not accept that in the church of that time the decisions of the church councils, the thoughts of individual teachers, and church tradition had sidelined the Bible from its original position. Their position crystallized to become the formal principle of the Reformation, which is revealed in the confessional books of the Lutheran Church, 'We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all -doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged.'" ³

Uljas further writes: "Luther wrote in his preface to the German Bible, 'We must always allow the prophets and the apostles to sit in the teacher's place and listen at their feet to what they say, and we will not dictate what they should hear.' When this formula was followed in the Reformation, it led to a second principle: 'Alone by faith, alone by grace, and alone by the merit of Christ.'" ²

Foundation of Faith

Just as God inspired the writing of the Bible through the Holy Spirit, He continues to reveal His Word to us today through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20). God's Word, enlightened through His Holy Spirit, is the sure foundation on which living faith rests. As Apostle Paul expresses, those who are of the household of God "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

The Bible Reveals Christ and the Way to Heaven

The psalmist writes, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). The Bible is a rich book. It provides answers to many problems and questions. Above all, it is the message of Jesus Christ and the salvation He prepared. The Bible calls this message the gospel of Christ. Luther writes in the preface to the Old Testament: "What is the New Testament but the public sermon and revelation of Christ, given in the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ?" Peter writes, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet.1:19).

Jesus taught that a person should search the Scriptures because they testify of Him (John 5:39). "The reading of God's Word is a good thing. However, the Bible teaches that faith comes by hearing and accepting the gospel. Study and knowledge of the written Word of God is necessary for us, because it leads us to seek Christ and His grace kingdom. It also teaches a child of God to grow in the knowledge of God and the Savior, Jesus Christ. When Jesus fought against the tempter, He drove off the enemy with God's Word, and then the angels came and served Him. God's Word is a place of refuge. It is a lamp for

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our feet and a light for our path.”²

Jim Frantti

¹ Finnish preacher and long-time member of the board of directors of Suomen Rauhaniyhdistysten Keskusyhdistys RY (SRK), Juhani Uljas wrote several articles as well as the book *The Treasure Hidden in a Field*, which was published in English by the Laestadian Lutheran Church (LLC).

² Uljas, Juhani, *The Treasure Hidden in a Field*, LLC, 2003

³ Book of Concord, p. 464