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D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the Authority of Scripture — We Must Choose Between Two Positions

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Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was one of the great preachers of the last century. A medical doctor by training, he was a powerful expositor, whose ministry at Westminster Chapel in London influenced thousands of his fellow preachers. A stalwart defender of biblical Christianity, Dr. Lloyd-Jones understood that the issue of biblical authority is paramount, and that the church must choose between two contrasting views of Scripture.

Here is an excerpt from his sermon on Ephesians 6:14, The Authority of Scripture:

There can be no doubt whatsoever that all the troubles in the Church today, and most of the troubles in the world, are due to a departure from the authority of the Bible. And, alas, it was the Church herself that led in the so-called Higher Criticism that came from Germany just over a hundred years ago. Human philosophy took the place of revelation, man's opinions were exalted and Church leaders talked about 'the advance of knowledge and science', and 'the assured results' of such knowledge. The Bible then became a book just like any other book, out-of-date in certain respects, wrong in other respects, and so on. It was no longer a book on which you could rely implicitly.

There is no question at all that the falling away, even in Church attendance, in this country is the direct consequence of the Higher Criticism. The man in the street says, 'What do these Christians know? It is only their opinion, they are just perpetrating something that the real thinkers and scientists have long since seen through and have stopped considering'. Such is the attitude of the man in the street! He does not listen any longer, he has lost all interest. The whole situation is one of drift; and very largely, I say, it is the direct and immediate outcome of the doubt that has been cast by the Church herself upon her only real authority. Men's opinions have taken the place of God's truth, and the people in their need are turning to the cults, and are listening to any false authority that offers itself to them.

We all therefore have to face this ultimate and final question: Do we accept the Bible as the Word of God, as the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, or do we not? Is the whole of my thinking governed by Scripture, or do I come with my reason and pick and choose out of Scripture and sit in judgment upon it, putting myself and modern knowledge forward as the ultimate standard and authority? The issue is crystal clear: Do I accept Scripture as a revelation from God, or do I trust to speculation, human knowledge, human learning, human understanding and human reasons? Or, putting it still more simply, Do I pin my faith to, and subject all my thinking to, what I read in the Bible? Or do I defer to modern knowledge, to modern learning, to what people think today, to what we know at this present time which was not known in the past? It is inevitable that we occupy one or the other of those two positions.

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