

# Heidelberg



## Theological Seminary



### *View of Scripture*

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### ***Clearness***

Being closed does not mean being hidden. While there are portions of Scripture that are hard to understand, the fundamental things necessary for us to know in this life are clearly and fully revealed. Such things as the creation and fall; the consequences of sin; the justice and mercy of God; the establishment of a covenant people; the Person and work of Jesus Christ; the necessity of forgiveness and faith—all these are clear and evident to the most unsophisticated mind. Even when the truth of what is presented in Scripture is rejected, what is taught is clear and rejection is based upon a refusal to believe, not because it cannot be understood.

### ***Conclusion***

The preceding points summarize the view of Scripture held by HTS. God has revealed Himself in His work and Word. That Word, restricted to those writings inspired by the Spirit of God and written by the apostles and prophets, is authoritative, necessary, sufficient, and clear. We therefore hold to them without doubt as infallible and inerrant, not because of our own intellect or authority, but because the Spirit of God convinces us of the truth of them. While our interpretation of them may fail or our obedience to them may falter, the Scripture alone is the Word of God and is received as such by all those who claim the Name of Jesus as their hope and comfort in this life and the next.

# **View of Scripture By Heidelberg Theological Seminary**

## ***Introduction***

A brief look at the first seven articles of the Belgic Confession of Faith demonstrates with what high regard Heidelberg Theological Seminary (HTS) holds the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The whole of the confession is founded upon the presupposition that God is and that He has made Himself known. Without embarrassment, the Belgic Confession grounds its argument upon the fact that God is a self-conscious being Who is the Creator of the universe. He knows Himself and His creation, and our knowledge of Him and of ourselves is by way of revelation of Him and from Him. All creation, “creatures, great and small”—including man—is an elegant book sufficient to lead us to recognize the everlasting power and divinity of God.

More significant is the pinnacle of revelation in the Word of God. This revelation has been spoken by the apostles and prophets. The Spirit of God, preserved in written form, has superintended their words and more clearly and fully make God known to us. This same Spirit confirms in us the truth of those words, whose work is necessary in order for us to properly accept, analyze, and understand what is revealed in them. Since it is the Spirit Who teaches, we receive it for what it is, the Word of God, and not the word of man.

## ***Not All Claims are Valid***

Not everything that claims to be the Word of God is the Word of God. There is a “canon” or set books, which HTS recognizes as having come from God. Yet it is not the Church that grants this status. Each book of the Bible possesses the confirmation of the Spirit both internal to the writings and in the hearts of God’s people. These books are listed in the Belgic Confession and are the 66 books normally found in a Protestant Bible. Only these books of the Bible are recognized, all others are excluded. Some apocryphal books expressly stated are rejected but the principle of exclusion extends to all other religious and philosophical writings. Such other writings may be used with discretion, but are not to be received with the same submission of the intellect and will.

## ***The Features of This Revelation***

Such a high view of revelation carries with it the responsibility to understand the limits placed upon us by the very nature of that revelation. There are particular features or attributes of the Word of God that are necessary to understand if we are to have full faith and confidence in its teachings. These features are not intended to limit the knowledge, which God has of Himself, or to imply that God Himself is limited in any way. However, these features do define the boundaries beyond which the pursuit of the knowledge of God becomes mere speculation, distorting or suppressing the truth, rather than benefiting from it. A proper view of the Scripture is essential to a proper acceptance of the revelation given.

## ***Authority***

Authority is the fundamental aspect of Scripture that sets it apart from all other writings. The Word of God is the truth. Because God Himself is the final Author, there can be nothing brought forward to contradict or countermand what is taught. Bundled in this authority is the power and effectiveness by which the Spirit of God converts the soul, instructs the mind, and directs the will in all those who believe. It is the means by which the Spirit governs the Church, and all other documents used by the Church—whether creeds, catechisms, decisions, sermons, constitutions, or papers—are subject to it.

## ***Necessity***

From this aspect of authority flows necessity. There are no longer any prophets or apostles in the Church; there is no new revelation. The Spirit has caused the canon to be written down and has now closed it. We therefore need these writings so that we are able to rightly know God and, by the work of the Spirit, hear the good news and believe without doubt what is taught in them.

## ***Sufficiency***

The closure of the canon does not mean we are deprived of any necessary revelation. What is received is sufficient for us to know what it is we are to believe and how we are to live. The Scripture fully reveals the will of God so much so that it is forbidden to add to them or take away from them. This sufficiency means that the revelation, which God intends for our time, is complete, and we have no need of anything further.