

4-18-1952

A Critical Study of the Problem of Religious Authority within Western Christendom

Carl-Reid Duhrkoop

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following
faculty committee:

First reader: Eldon Fuhrman Approved 5/15/52

Second reader: E. Sterling Plimney Approved 5/15/52

A CRITICAL STUDY
OF THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY
WITHIN WESTERN CHRISTENDOM

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Carl-Reid Duhrkoop
April 18, 1952

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the human mind has struggled with the problem of ultimate truth, but many times it has been turned back frustrated. Some have gone so far as to deny any possibility of having certain knowledge. Others would echo the question of Pontius Pilate: "What is truth?"¹ To these uncertain ones, Pilate's question refers to whether or not there are any valid norms, or if any objective standard actually exists. Their answer would be that they do not know "for sure".

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. This study is intended (1) to present some of the issues faced by every graduate and under-graduate student in today's colleges and universities; (2) to point out some of the intellectual pitfalls which appear when certain moral choices are made; (3) to ponder some resolutions of conflict by various schools of thought on the question of eternal truth and essential norms of conduct; and (4) to provide an adequate basis for decision.

Justification of the problem and procedure. Today's confused world but reflects upon the education, philosophy

¹John 18:38, A.V. (All Bible quotations are from the Authorized or King James Version).

and religion of our time. One has said that a return to bed-rock in philosophy and theology is essential to our generation.² Some would immediately question, of course, as to just what was bed-rock. Bed-rock implies that there must be some ground for logical thought processes, some eternal underlying truth, some sure authority. The question or problem of authority, therefore, is a vital aspect to sound reasoning and abundant living. The question of religious authority for Christendom is particularly gripping, since many are inclined to follow the ancient view of Protagoras that ". . . Man is the measure of all . . ."³ On every hand, men are quick to excuse themselves or attempt to save themselves by reference to some authority which pleases them as sufficient explanation for their conduct. The modern mind, Dr. Henry remarks is unlike the Christian Culture of the Medieval period, in that it ". . . left no room for supernatural revelation and, "is unlike the classic Graeco-Roman mind, "... . made no place for an objective eternal moral order to which man stands in unique relation . . ."⁴ The

²Paul Gerhardt Hvidding, "A Study of Two Early Theologians at Drew Theological Seminary: Randolph S. Foster and John Miley" (Unpublished thesis for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, Western School of Evangelical Religion, Portland, Oregon, 1950), p.2.

³Paul J. Glenn, Introduction to Philosophy (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1947), p. 62.

⁴Carl F. H. Henry, Remaking The Modern Mind (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p.21.

whole stream of modern philosophy contains this element of contrast with the convictions of classic ancient and medieval thought.

In this study, effort will be made to deal with the problem of religious authority within Christendom historically and critically, and to face up with its relation to Christian life and thought. Four contemporary views in America will be compared and contrasted concerning their treatment of this traditional problem. True effort will be made to strive for objectivity, but not such objectivity as leads to vagueness and uncertainty. This age needs something definite in the line of assurance.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Authority. Throughout this investigation, authority has been interpreted as any objective standard, witness or norm to which appeal could be made in support of religious opinion. Necessarily, of course, this study has been limited to the study of the religious authority within Christendom. This concept of authority is the actual basis of the study presented here.

Dominion. This term is conceived as sovereignty or domination in the realm of thought. The idea of sovereignty or control is implied, in the sense that some person or persons or agencies presume to proscribe for several others

certain choices and actions. This negates the idea of personal responsibility for right choices and passes it on to others.

Moral Responsibility. In this study, one concept is held regarding the responsibility of individual persons. This view is that each and every person in the world is a responsible being, and, therefore, personally accountable for all choices made in the realm of thought, conduct, morality and religion. Some leeway is granted, of course, for those who are actually limited and not accountable due either to their physical or mental condition, or their age.

Human Freedom. By the idea of human freedom is understood one who belonging to the human family is capable of acting without being necessitated, or caused to do something, by someone or something else. A man or woman who has such power to act freely, that is, has been endued with self-active power, is a free agent, and thus the author of his own acts.⁵

Intelligence. The concept of intelligence is herein held to be the power or act of understanding. It is the intellect or mind in operation. Further, it is conceived to

⁵Thomas N. Ralston, Elements of Divinity (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1924), p. 165.

include the power to meet situations which are novel with successful adjustment, as well as the ability to make moral choices.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

Limitations of the study. This study has been limited to the field of religious authority within western Christendom. It does not deal with other types of authority or with other religions. It has been intended to be both thorough and critical. It has been necessary to include some of the underlying philosophical pre-suppositions of various thinkers, and to relate these to theology. The relation of reason to revelation, and the inspiration of the Scriptures as well as their canonization were studied to some extent. Other points of Christian Doctrine are touched upon only incidentally.

Procedure for remaining chapters. A historical review of the problem is presented in chapter two. It will not be extensive, but through secondary sources will attempt to show some early developments from the simple Christian Doctrine based upon Divine Revelation to the tradition of the Roman See. It will touch upon some of the decisions of the Church and her dominant philosophy. It will concern the renaissance of pagan philosophy as well. The problem today has basically the same contending positions of the Church, the Word of God, and the Individual as it did in the early days of the seventeenth century.

The program outlined for chapter three is a practical one. In what ways do the decisions and/or positions of the past apply today? How far can the Church interpose its own alleged authority into private lives of "the faithful"? Are there some permanent standards declared by the Bible to be binding upon Christian "believers"? Is man "the measure"?

A very important part of the investigation is the treatment accorded the problem of authority by current American thought leaders. Representative of the various schools are as follows: For the Church, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen; for the liberals, Charles Clayton Morrison; for the Neo-orthodox, Reinhold Niebuhr; and for the conservatives, Carl F. H. Henry. Three volumes each writer has contributed will be source material in the fourth chapter.

The Summary and Conclusion of this thesis will be presented in chapter five. While to some extent provision is made to notice implications and make some evaluations, the true conclusions will not be given until the last chapter.

There will also be a short section of appended Notes following the Bibliography containing some discussions of some problems turned up in the various chapters, but not adequately studied.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM HISTORICALLY

A critical study of the problem of religious authority in Christendom is not possible without some understanding of what has taken place in the past. For this reason, we will at this time give consideration to the growth of the problem.

I. EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

The struggle of tradition and Scripture. The designation of this section is called a contradiction by a converted Roman Catholic theologian. He asserts that not only the delivery of the Christian message, but also its substance are called tradition, *Papa'Scous* 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6. ". . . Tradition is, therefore, at the very foundation of our religious knowledge."¹ It is clear, however, that the sacred writers did contrast the mandate of God and tradition of men (Matt. 15:2; Mark 7:3; Gal. 1:14; and Col. 2:8). After the Revelation was in writing, this antagonism shifted toward the rivalry of the Bible and human tradition.

The conflict was latent for centuries. On the one hand, the authority of Scripture was taken for granted, yet not decisively formulated. On the other hand, human traditions were not clearly thought of as independent quantities, but merely

¹Georges A. Barrois, "Calvin's Principle of Doctrinal Authority and Its Catholic Background" (Unpublished thesis for the degree of Master of Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1942), p.1.

as the pious legacy of the belief and experience of the past generations. Their value was, of course, very unequal, and many an outgrowth not only constituted a dead load, but proved to be a real danger to the purity of the creed.²

It is the opinion of some that the early Christian Church held to no abstract formulation of authority. It was not necessary, for the only rule of faith was the Revelation of God. The early believers received the Scriptures of the Old Testament from the Hebrew faith, and also in the life and doctrine of Christ as the final stage of that particular Revelation, together with its fulfillment of prophecy and the new covenant. These were ". . . reported by eye-witnesses or compiled from immediate testimonies, after a confuse period of oral transmission. The early Christian writings were held by the primitive Churches as the permanent and authoritative record of their belief."³

A more recent and comprehensive work bears out the same idea as above. In his two volume set "A History of Christian Thought", Dr. J. L. Neve asks

What is the relation of the Scriptures to the History of Dogma? The teachings of Jesus and the Apostles constituted the special object of thought for the early Christian Fathers. This teaching was at first a living Word, not confined to the New Testament writings. The latter were but partially known, and only gradually did they come into the possession of the whole Church.

²Loc. cit.

³Ibid., p.5.

They were, in fact, special impulses for the creation of a recognized canon. The Gnostics aimed to prove the legitimacy of their peculiar speculations by an interpretation of writings which they claimed to be Christian and Apostolic. The question as to the extent of the canon therefore became a burning issue for the Ancient Catholic Church. And the Church Fathers had to interpret its writings in harmony with the tradition of the Church (regula fidei). . .⁴

The development of doctrine cannot be treated apart from the rise of the Ancient Catholic Church. One important phase pertains to the change in meaning which came to be attached to the term "Catholic". To Ignatius and the early Christians, it signified Christians in general, the Church of which Christ was the center, as contrasted with particular congregations of believers. Later, however, it came to mean "orthodox" Christianity as distinguished from heretical sects.

The development of the "Rule of Faith" is also most important. Many historians feel that an early baptismal formula was quickly expanded into a brief statement of fundamental truths. By the third century, it was declared that this Confession of faith was not only made up of the important elements of the Apostles' teaching, but was also composed by them. The oldest form of this Confession extant is known as the Roman Symbol from the middle of the second century. Due to the obligation to silence held at that time (the disciplina arcani), the so-called Apostles' Creed was not

⁴J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought, (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), Vol. I, p. 27.

committed to writing or disclosed to the heathen. Dr. Fisher speaks of paraphrases and expansions of the creed in the writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen under the name of "Rules of Faith"⁵. These rules of faith were thought to be the definite, authoritative teaching that the Church held everywhere against Gnostical innovations and perversions.

The attitude of the church concerning the sacred books seems to have been consistently receptive. They were considered to be the gift of God to men since they were inspired by the Spirit, and the people received them to the exclusion of other writings. The proclamation of canonical lists apparently had the primary purpose of preventing the loss of any of the sacred legacy, though the necessity for showing Catholic doctrine was realized. As early as the latter part of the fourth and early portion of the fifth century, Synods and Councils of the West began to emphasize what the universal Catholic Church should hold and what it ought to avoid.

In 495 came the decretal on the reception of books by Gelasius, Bishop of Rome. This decretal began with a quotation from I Corinthians 3:11 about one foundation, and concluded by quoting from I Thessalonians 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good".

⁵George Park Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), p. 71.

The decretal of Pope Gelasius is representative of the views consistently held in the older Church: the final authority in doctrine rests on the Scripture only. Opinions of private doctors are to be accepted for their own intrinsecal value, which is to be weighed after the standard of their conformity to the Divine Revelation. . . .⁶

The councils had no absolute or independent authority, for the early councils convened for the maintenance of the creed since purity of doctrine was endangered.

. . . The detail of their proceedings shows a constant attention to faithfully adhere to the doctrine of the Scripture, and, while stating the creed, never to depart from the historical data of the Revelation. Traditional views of the particular Churches are obviously subservient to the scriptural interest, which remains in the foreground. . . .⁷

In this regard, it was considered lawful for one assembly to confirm the decision of earlier councils, only as a faithful expression of scriptural teaching. The Second Council of Constantinople in 553 confirmed the first four ecumenical councils as follows:

. . . "We profess to hold and to preach the faith that was in the beginning committed to the Holy Apostles by God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and that was preached by the same Apostles in the whole world. The holy Fathers confessed it, declared it, and transmitted it to the Holy Church, and chiefly those Fathers who convened in the four holy Synods. We follow them and receive them for all and in all. Whatever is not in accordance with the definitions of the said councils concerning the

⁶Barrois, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷Loc. cit.

right faith, we hold as hostile to piety and therefore we do condemn and anathematize".⁸

It was evidently taken for granted that declarative and ministerial authority belonged to the Church assemblies or to private doctors. Some tendencies toward overrating human authorities surely existed in germ in the early institutions of the church, ". . . and gradually developed into a flagrant usurpation of the divine privilege of exclusive doctrinal authority".⁹ By 1053, the Councils were actually likened to the Gospels themselves. To the bishops of Antioch was sent a symbol by Pope Leo IX which read:". . . 'I receive the four Councils in every way, and venerate them like the four Gospels, since the universal Church in the four parts of the world is founded upon them as upon a square stone'".¹⁰ While this may be but a figure of speech, it does show the growing trend. However, as early as 520, Pope Hormisdas had pronounced the first Synod of Constantinople and any further Councils to be held as equally authoritative.¹¹ Such an endorsement is recognition of the power of the Church to proscribe as to matters of faith and discipline in last resort.

⁸H. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, Edition undecima, quam paravit Cl. Bannwart S. J., Friburgi Brisgoviae, Herder 1911, n^o 212, cited by Georges Barrois, op. cit.; p. 10.

⁹Barrois, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁰Denzinger, n^o 349, cited by Georges Barrois, op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹Barrois, loc. cit.

The power of tradition as normative of the faith was likewise acknowledged in dogmatic statement on particular subjects, and yet not proclaimed as universal principle. For example, in 787, the Second Nicene Council held regarding images that ". . . 'Whosoever rejects any ecclesiastical tradition, either written or not, be anathematized'." ¹² The same rule was expressed by the Fourth Council of Constantinople in condemning Photius, and attempting to found it upon 2 Thessalonians 2:15. This text was distorted in the Latin to read: ". . . 'The great Apostle Paul openly advises to hold the traditions of the Saints who shone before, either by word, or by epistle'." ¹³ Actually, he referred only to his own preaching and his previous letter to the Thessalonians.

A new source of authority was arising. It was still just a tendency, but one not easily uprooted. There had been no formal definition by church assembly or Roman See, and yet the authority of Councils and Church traditions was accepted as a rule of faith apart from the Scriptures. No longer could the orthodoxy of persons or doctrine be judged on the basis of Scripture, but conformity to the ecclesiastical standard. ". . . mere subscription to canonical

¹²Denzinger, n° 308, cited by Georges Barrois, loc.cit.

¹³Denzinger, n° 336, cited by Georges Barrois, op. cit., p. 12.

statements gradually replaced the supernatural adhesion to the revealed doctrine. . ."¹⁴

Various reasons are given by historians for the emancipation of ecclesiastical tradition. Outstanding in this development was the increasing power exercised by the Roman bishop. Rome's geographical significance and size were quite important here. The bishops of Rome were frequently called upon to preside over councils and arbitrate discussions between particular churches. Irenaeus taught that it was in Rome where both Peter and Paul worked and died. The Petrine tradition of Apostolic Succession preserved by the Roman bishops was considered most trustworthy, for men did not believe that the tradition of other centers would disagree with that preserved at Rome. Rome possessed the rule of faith known as "the Roman Symbol". Heretics were better controlled at Rome than in Alexandria or Constantinople, and so Rome was believed the guardian of the Church's unity.¹⁵

The development of the power of the papacy, that is, its doctrinal authority, follows much the same pattern as the emancipation of Church tradition. As early as the fifth century, the Roman bishops were claiming all the personal privileges granted by Christ to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19. Barrois remarks that the exercise of papal authority was not

¹⁴Barrois, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁵Neve, op. cit., p. 74.

always harmless, but rather harmful in its failure to confirm the decisions of the Councils and Synods.

. . . It actually happened that it opposed them, and in the days of the Reformation, Luther will humorously point at the inconsistencies of an alleged constant and homogenous ecclesiastical tradition.¹⁶

Many times, in this growth of power, the doctrinal authority of the Roman bishop was not directly aimed at nor defined, but alleged to be commonly accepted. Infallibility was not then proclaimed as an organic article of the creed. It was thought to be fact, but not law. ". . . Theoretically it was still possible to fall back. But the events proved that it was too late, and the impact of the Reformation hurried the promulgation of the new standards of the Roman faith."¹⁷

Lest it seem that a summary dismissal has been made of that large segment of Christendom known as the Greek Orthodox Church, it must be understood that the problem is to treat of that part of Christendom known as the Western Church. In this regard, therefore, we note some factors characteristic to Western Christianity and its theology.

Western Christianity was governed by the interest of creedal authority, the authority of a recognized creed, namely the so-called "Roman

¹⁶Barrois, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁷Barrois, op. cit., p. 14.

Symbol". . . The note was sounded by Tertullian when he demanded that cred quod traditum est. . . He calls the symbol "a law of faith" (lex fidei, in Virg., vol. 1--Spect.4). In the mind of Tertullian, furthermore, there goes with this demand to submit to the rule of faith the conception that the Biblical foundations for the Symbol are rational,. . .Reason and faith, therefore are not antithetical. . .

With this was associated that peculiar legalism which soon appears as a characteristic of Western Roman Christianity. As the East inclined to speculation, so the West was interested in moral righteousness,. . .

At the same time we note as a characteristic of Western Christianity the interest in the institutional features of the Church. . . 18

Doctor Fisher builds a bridge of thought for us between the Ancient or Patristic Church and the Church of the Middle Ages or the Medieval Period. His bridge or connecting link is Gregory the First, a leader and administrator. As this era is entered, the Church is marching to convert and train the Germanic nations. They were taught Roman doctrine, and the Roman institutions grew up among them.

. . . In general it was no longer a question what these doctrines are. They were transmitted as an inheritance from the Church of the Fathers to the succeeding ages. It was a sacred tradition, attested by ecclesiastical authority, the validity of which it was impious to doubt. Its living guardians were the Roman hierarchy. . . 19

An interesting observation by a thoroughly secular historian is introduced here, and in some measure substantiates the slow evolution of the "Churchly" idea.

¹⁸Neve, op. cit., p. 169-170.

¹⁹Fisher, op. cit., p. 199.

In the early period of Christianity the believer worshiped God and sought salvation largely through his own efforts. Following the growth of Church organization and the crystallization of its dogma, the Church now constituted the indispensable intermediary between God and man. Without the Church the individual could not hope to approach God.²⁰

That the above is true, in a very real sense, is most clearly indicated from the life of the pious Bernard of Clairvaux. This man, a true Christian mystic, was free in every sense from pantheism, and experienced a definite personal assurance of forgiveness. In fact, in many instances, his works are nearly Pauline, and yet, Bernard would affirm most strongly that

. the individual comes in touch with the gracious influences of Christ only through the medium of the Church (sacraments). He is a firm believer in the Gregorian principle that it is the duty of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to compel all the world to serve the interest of the heavenly and divine. Thus Bernard is at one and the same time the greatest mystic as well as the most influential church diplomat of his age.²¹

Next to the new piety, that stemmed from the life and ministry of Bernard and others, was the revival of interest in philosophy and theology. It was known in the Roman Church as Scholasticism. The Scholastic Philosophy in its more strict form is a development between the years 1050 and 1300. We shall develop this matter more fully in our next section.

²⁰T. Walter Wallbank and Alastair M. Taylor, Civilization--Past and Present, Vol. I. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1942), Vol I., p. 194.

²¹Neve, op. cit., p. 187.

The Scholastic approach to the problem. While the dates of the main periods are set quite arbitrarily, many Church historians have agreed as to three general periods: Ancient, Medieval and Modern. Relative to this portion of the study, the dating by George P. Fisher has been followed. This was because even Roman Catholic authorities place the Scholastics in the years 800-1300, or within the period which Fisher designated as Medieval.

Before the end of the eighth century, the Church began a time of special education emphasis. It was in this so-called "Revival of Learning" that earliest beginnings of Scholastic Philosophy were traceable. In medieval language, the word "scholastic" was applied to any recognized scholar, but was especially applied to heads of schools. It is used here, however, to identify a special system of philosophy which arose in the schools of the eighth century and reached its zenith in the work of Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.

. . . Its characteristic marks are two: first, it is thoroughly rational in method, using the light of reason alone for the investigation of truth. In this it follows the best of the philosophies of antiquity, the Greek, and the best of the Greek philosophies, the Aristotelean. Its second characteristic mark is that it uses the Christian faith or Revelation as a directive norm. . . Faith is certain, and . . . can be used as a criterion or test; . . .²²

²²Paul J. Glenn, The History of Philosophy, (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), p. 171-2.

An outstanding question to the early Scholastics, though largely developed in the eleventh century, was the question of Universal Ideas or simply Universals. Universals were the objects of a universal idea or concept. There is, i.e., a universal idea of tree. This is a representation in the intellect of an essence called "treeness". This essence can be found and checked by every tree which ever existed or will exist. Trees will always be identified whether they are palm trees or fir trees, green or white, young or old.

The question of universals was important because it touched upon the basis of all rational knowledge. It had been asked if there were anything which did correspond to universals in the order of reality outside of mind. To this, came several answers. One was the answer "yes" by Ultra-Realism, which actually made the senses untrustworthy and led to skepticism. Another answer was the "no" of Nominalism, for universals were only arbitrary group names and nothing more. A third answer was Conceptualism's "no", for universals were only modes of the mind's concept forming and had no essential reality. Moderate Realism also answered "no", but claimed that universals had a real "basis" in reality outside the mind.

This struggle over universals was not always clearly defined. The dispute was between Ultra-Realists and Anti-Realists, who were sometimes Nominalists, sometimes

Conceptualists, and sometimes Moderate Realists. It is to be noticed, also, that several changed from one side to the other during this period of controversy.

Universals had been discussed by the Greeks, beginning in Pre-Socratic times, but Plato was first to develop a specific doctrine. He taught a special form of Ultra-Realism. Aristotle taught a Moderate-Realism. The early Church Fathers, however, scarcely dealt with the question. Rather, they discussed theological questions. Later, these questions, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation were taken by the Scholastics and studied in the light of philosophy. Thus, these questions had some reference to the problem of universals. The line between the field of theology and that of philosophy had not yet been drawn. Many early scholastics felt, therefore, that the truths of Revelation were the proper objects of philosophical study.

Basically, "Scholasticism was an application of reason to theology, not in order to revise the creed or to explore for new truth, but to systematize and prove the existing traditional beliefs. . . ." ²³ The schoolmen, however, were greatly hindered by including in the realm of faith the whole area of the teaching of the Church. ". . . there was always the question how far reason could possibly advance in its task of showing the rationality of the whole sum of religious beliefs. . . ." ²⁴

²³Fisher, op. cit., p. 212.

²⁴Loc. cit.

All along, there were troublesome factions to the schoolmen. Some doctrines could not be directly verified at the bar of reason, and they were tempted to rid themselves of this material by rationalizing it away. If they failed, skepticism would result, or it was necessary to retreat to the Church's authority. Both of these would undermine Scholasticism.

. . . we notice two rival tendencies, two classes of theologians, the one disposed to magnify the ability and exalt the function of the intellect and to make less of the indispensableness of authority; the other to curb reason and to insist on intuition and feeling rather than logic and on the voice of the Church as the basis of certitude. . .²⁵

One way out of their dilemma was justification of the most arbitrary points of view by fictitious appeals to Scripture. The appeals were not insincere, but were jeopardized by unsound methods of exegesis.

. . . The literal meaning of the Scripture yielded to sophisticated and often unfounded accommodations. An excessive freedom in the treatment of the sacred texts had in the past been accountable for the introduction of many parasitical doctrines or practices. Now a more distorted exegesis was necessary for their justification and maintenance, and made the real divine authority of the Scripture powerless to check the paralyzing corruption, which then increased in a geometrical progression.²⁶

In their studies, the Schoolmen really distinguished the literal sense, actually expressed in the Scriptural account, from the spiritual sense. The spiritual sense was divided

²⁵Ibid., p. 213.

²⁶Barrois, op. cit., p. 15.

further into species, according to the uses intended. Thus Scripture was susceptible, at least in theory, to four simultaneous interpretations: literal, typical or allegorical, moral and anagogical.

Of those four senses, the first was fundamental and usually considered to be basic to the spiritual sense, which was not supposed to come from arbitrary interpretation, but to be really connected with the inspired text. Such an attitude accumulating since the Latin Fathers was certain to lead to unbalanced allegorical interpretations, which again would be accepted as traditional material.

. . . Protests or reactions against the excess of the "flamboyant" interpretation were bound to be unpopular, as, for instance, the rationalistic tendencies of Aquinas, who professed that of the four traditional sense of the Scripture, the literal one is universal, while spiritual senses do not indiscriminately belong to every part of the Scripture. . . , and that "the spiritual sense does not contain anything that is necessary for the faith, unless the Scripture teaches it elsewhere openly and literally". . .²⁷

It was seen that adequate treatment of Scriptural sources was not possible. Among other reasons, the scarcity of books and high price during the Middle Ages is partly responsible for this method of proof-texts. The literature of the Fathers, however, was available. The schoolmen seemed to turn in the direction of allegory with their references to certain Patristic sources.

²⁷ Aquinas, Quodlibet VII, quaest. , art. 15, ad 5m., cited by Georges Barrois, op. cit., p. 16.

Aquinas, Ia Pars, quaest. I, art. 10, ad 1m., loc. cit.

We may, by way of conclusion, acknowledge that the use of scriptural and patristic authorities by the medieval theologians and the late Scholastics, could not offer any sound basis for the elaboration of scientific christian dogmatics. This was bound to be a failure: on the one hand, the Scripture had ceased to be the unambiguous, constant and objective expression of the revealed truth, and was taken as a springboard for arbitrary speculations. On the other hand, the value of ecclesiastical tradition, materialised in the writings of the Fathers, was equally misunderstood, and the theologians of the University of Paris, in their articles against the doctrines of the Reformation, had a pretty keen view of the situation, yet not of the remedies to be applied, when they wrote: "One must know that the Scripture is like a nose of wax, because it can be bent in either sense. But the determination of the Church is fixed and stable"

28

...

Outstanding Schoolmen in the development of Scholastic thought were Anselm the Archbishop of Canterbury who believed that men learned by both faith and reason, Roscellinus of Compiègne, Abelard, and Bernard of Clairvaux who was not generally considered a Scholastic but a mystic. While great steps were taken in the twelfth century in the building of the Scholastic edifice, it was not until the thirteenth century, or nearly five hundred years after the first consideration of universals, that Scholasticism attained its greatest heights.

... With such authorities as the Bible, the creeds developed in the Church councils, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the

²⁸ Articuli a facultate s.theologica Parisiense determinati super materiis fidei nostrae hodie controversis, - cum Antidoto (1544), cited by Georges Barrois, op. cit., p.20-21.

works of Aristotle they sought by deductive reasoning to harmonize theology and reason, sacred and profane learning, science and religion. Two such scholars were St. Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas.²⁹

In his well known work, "The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit", Auguste Sabatier asserts that the dogma of an infallible pope dates from the Middle Ages and the theocratic pontificate of Gregory VII.

"... Thomas Aquinas is the first among the Doctors who brought it forward as an article of Catholic theology."³⁰ Actually, Thomas considered it his task to harmonize the doctrines of the Greek Philosopher Aristotle with the specific teachings of the Roman Church, "... of whose authority, including the supreme authority of the Popes, he was a devoted champion. His Summa Theologica covers the field of Ethics as well as of Theology. . ."³¹

Aquinas taught the necessity of revelation because man has a higher end than all other creatures. He is to participate in Divine glory, and for that reason, supernatural aid and light are imperatives. He made distinction between two classes of truths.

There are the truths above reason, --for example, the Trinity. There are truths accessible to reason, --for example, the truth that there is a God. But even

²⁹Wallbank and Taylor, op. cit., p. 367.

³⁰Auguste Sabatier, The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1910), p. 129.

³¹Fisher, op. cit., p. 231.

truths of the second order need to be confirmed by the testimony of revelation, since practically the knowledge of God is attainable by only a few, through long effort, and not without an admixture of error. . . .³²

Thomas was the first to clearly distinguish between philosophy and theology. He taught that though they were one in the material objects (both treat of God, man, this world), they were distinct in formal objects. Theology deals with its subject matter under the light of divine revelation, while philosophy investigated its subject matter under the unaided light of human reason. His idea was that philosophy was to aid theology by deduction of scientific conclusions from the articles of faith. Theology was to aid philosophy as its directive norm. They were never to be contradictory.³³

During the lifetime of Thomas Aquinas, many members of his own order (the Dominicans) as well as members of other schools opposed him. He was opposed because of his following of Aristotle who was in disrepute, and because he rejected several philosophical traditions held by opposing schools. Thomas was condemned for several years in the Universities of Paris and Oxford, but in 1324, Aquinas was canonized. Since that time, Thomism has been taught in all Dominican schools and the schools of many

³²Ibid., p. 234.

³³Glenn, op. cit., p. 236-237.

other orders. It has been the ascendent Roman philosophy ever since. It is currently revived in what is known in philosophy as Neo-Scholasticism, and in theology as Neo-Thomism.

II. EFFECTS OF PHILOSOPHY

The previous section treated both early developments of the problem, and the Roman Catholic philosophic position. The portion of study which follows was a treatment of both the view of the Reformers on this problem, and the views of modern philosophy, and their varying effects upon the problem.

Relative to the effects of philosophy on Roman Church Authority, it was observed that Scholastic Philosophy was a tool used by the Church to defend positions already taken. Some schoolmen: Abelard in his Yes and No--Sic et Non--dealt with some of the traditions and obvious contradictions of the Fathers; others, Anselm, Aquinas and Bonaventura contended with the establishment of the immaculate conception of Mary; and Occam opposed the idea of Papal infallibility; but, in the main, the Scholastics were only called to strengthen certain assumptions already held by the Church.

The great schoolmen, and foremost among them, Thomas Aquinas, undertook the herculean task of

harmonizing the existing opinions and practices of the Church with the teaching of Augustine. They virtually attempted--and here Aquinas is the principal figure--to take up Aristotle into the company of the Apostles, and to establish a concord in the circle thus constituted. The task was an impossible one. . . .³⁴

Evident philosophical pre-suppositions. For the Reformers, philosophy was not an important matter. They were too busy with other work in returning to Scriptural principles and reviving Apostolic conditions.

. . . Luther . . . had not been trained in the philosophy of Aristotle. He had little regard for any philosophy. The most influential minds in his background were those of Augustine and the German mystics, notably John Tauler. John Calvin . . . also adhered closely to Augustine. Thus, Augustine became a dominant force in the theologies of both the Lutherans and the Calvinists. Neither Lutheran nor Calvinistic theology gave much place to the philosophical basis of theology. Neither Luther nor Calvin committed themselves to the logic and metaphysics of Aristotle.³⁵

Actually, Luther went so far as to say that Thomas Aquinas was responsible for the dominance of Aristotle in Christian thought, and ". . . he called him the devastator of the pious doctrine (W, 8, 127). He used to say that nobody will become a theologian except he undertakes it without Aristotle. . . ."³⁶

³⁴Fisher, op. cit., p. 262.

³⁵Hvidding, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁶Neve, op. cit., p. 221.

On The Word and the Scriptures, we find that Luther taught

Jesus Christ as the Word of God revealed to men. In the history of the man Jesus, God became manifest to us. We know of the earthly life of Jesus only through the Scriptures. The content of the Bible is Christ. He is the organizing principle of Scripture.

To this outward Word God adds the inner Word, for the historical Jesus is active and ever present as the exalted Lord through the Spirit.

By the term Word of God Luther has reference primarily to the living Word as preached in the Church (E, Op. Lat., 19, 243). But the truth of this Word is conditioned by its dependency upon the written word. Compare his energetic struggle against the Enthusiasts who stood for a theology of the inner light (E, 49, 87; 45, 35) and against Zwingli whose symbolical interpretation of the words of the institution was, in the eyes of Luther, an impious attempt at mastering the Bible in the name of reason.

The Bible is for Luther the only authority. To say that the Church takes precedence over the Bible, because she existed before the canon of the Scriptures was complete, is as foolish as if you would hold John the Baptist in greater honor than Christ, because of John's temporal precedence over Christ (E, Op. Lat., 1, 90ff.).³⁷

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 236-237.

Calvin, no less than Luther, held a very high view of Scripture. In an Appendix to his "The Protestant Dilemma", Doctor Carl F. H. Henry quotes Calvin as saying,

" . . . Since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve his truth in personal remembrance, . . . it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God himself" . . .

. . . For while Calvin stresses that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to all testimony of enlightened reason, and that "That alone is true faith which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts" (I, 1, ch. 7, sec. 5), and that "the word itself has not much certainty with us, unless when confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit" (I, 1, ch. 9, sec. 3), yet he leaves no doubt that he is not exalting the Spirit at the expense of the trustworthiness of the written word. . .³⁸

Neve writes that to Calvin the Scriptures were the only source and norm of Christian truth (Institutes III, 21, 3); that they were divinely inspired; and that there was " . . . 'directly communicated inner testimony which gives us a certainty of the Scriptures' authority that stands above all human logic' . . ."³⁹

³⁸Carl F. H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 229.

³⁹Neve, op. cit., p. 288.

Along with the tendencies toward an evangelical reform manifested in the lives and works of John Huss and Wycliffe, prior to the Council of Basel (1433-52) and later the Council of Trent (1546), there was the rise and surge of old paganism. This developed in the Middle Ages as undercover and also outright humanism. Following quickly after Luther's break with Rome came the intellectual break with Rome, and thought entered the Modern Period. The first definite anti-Scholastic philosophies were those formulated in the seventeenth century by Rene Descartes in France and Francis Bacon in England. Thinkers of the following centuries have developed many systems of thought, which have proved to be more or less unstable.

. . . Modern philosophy, impatient of anything resembling authority, holds itself strictly apart from connection with Revelation, and refuses to accept the services of revealed truth as its light and guide. Not all modern philosophies are non-Christian, but most are; and it is fair to characterize modern philosophy generally as un-Christian, if not anti-Christian.⁴⁰

A thorough-going history of philosophy would deal fairly with each important philosopher and show his place in the pattern of thought, his main contributions, and his effects on later thinkers. This was not the purpose of this

⁴⁰Glenn, op. cit., p. 275-276.

study, but some outline of philosophy has been presented. It was observed that English philosophy developed certain lines as received from the sensists or empiricists. Ideas inherent in Locke's philosophy laid the groundwork for Berkley and Hume's idealism, as well as Hume's influence upon Kant.

Kant is the dividing mark in thought for many people. Doctor Wilbur M. Smith speaks of many volumes which deal with "The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant", "Protestant Thought Before Kant", and "An Outline of the History of Christian Thought Since Kant."⁴¹ Kant, with his epistemology, propounded a scheme which gave the Christian Religion a death blow from which many have felt she has never recovered. Burt, in "Types of Religious Philosophy" states

. . . Like Hume and Huxley, Kant is quite conscious that his analysis has not proved the unreality of God, freedom, or immortality. It has simply shown, if sound, that these matters are beyond the competence of human knowledge.⁴²

⁴¹Wilbur M. Smith, Therefore Stand (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1945), p. 10.

⁴²Edwin A. Burt, Types of Religious Philosophy (New York: Harpers & Brothers, Publishers, 1939), p. 262.

But the problem properly comes, if certitude in this matter is not possible, we are left in despair, for how could one ever come to any satisfying religious truth?

Two prominent leaders in present-day thought are Friedrich Schleiermacher and Georg W. F. Hegel. These men were contemporaries on the faculty of Berlin University, but disliked each other intensely. Schleiermacher, who is called the founder of the "consciousness theologians", developed a religious philosophy around the idea of "the feeling of dependence". Hegel is said to have remarked that if this philosophy were true, then dogs were very religious because they were utterly dependent upon their masters. Hegel himself is best described as a pantheistic Monist or logical Evolutionist.⁴³

Other thinkers of note, but coming later were Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, who wrote much against the Hegelian dialectic, and Albrecht Ritschl and Ernest Troeltsch. Troeltsch was the link between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Kant was the link between the eighteenth and nineteenth.

⁴³ Hugh Ross Macintosh, Types of Modern Theology (London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1937), p. 102.

But what of philosophical presuppositions? There are several. To the Empiricist, the ultimate test of truth was its conformity with facts considered relevant by sense perception. Skepticism was the only reasonable attitude, therefore. The ultimate moral test was pleasure and pain. Supernatural events such as Revelation could not be perceived by the senses, and therefore were not possible. Testimony to the supernatural did not have adequate evidence. We were not required to believe or deny, because such thoughts were not appropriate for human minds.⁴⁴

To the Rationalist, the essence of religion is not metaphysical knowledge but devotion to moral duty. Man is autonomous, nay, more, he is competent morally to reinterpret God's nature in terms of his own moral experience. Basically, this is ". . . the bold affirmation of the doctrine, as a sound foundation for religion, that man's moral duty is supreme and that theological doctrines must humbly conform to it."⁴⁵ Religion and science are separated by a great gulf. All religions are on the same plane. Philosophy is the supreme court of appeal in matters of faith. Reason must be reconciled with religion.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Burtt, op. cit., p. 239.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 242.

⁴⁶Macintosh, op. cit., p. 107.

The principles of "natural religion" harmonize with revealed religion. Revealed religion only supplied the lack of natural religion.⁴⁷

Expected theological implications. Accepting the idea that the basic premises of religion and morality were universal, rationalism brought in a new authority--universality. No longer was it necessary to hold high views of revelation. After all, it was not even necessary to believe in the importance of salvation. The only task of religion, therefore, was to promote morality. The authority for this was the Creator-creature relationship, side-stepping the Bible as authority and making religion only a support to morality.⁴⁸

However, there were other implications. Some appealed to Christian experience as the measure for the truth or the falsity of doctrine. This meant the Bible was merely the fruit of the religious consciousness. It was the expression of religion; not God's authoritative word to man. From the experience of religion comes religious authority without appeal to the Bible or creeds. To the individual's experience can be added the group experience of all religious men, whether Christians or unbelievers. Authority is internal. It roots in life, and not in special revelation. It

⁴⁷Harold B. Kuhn, "The Basis of Authority in Christianity, Asbury Seminary, II (Winter, 1947), p. 133.

⁴⁸Loc. cit.

may change as the individual grows older.⁴⁹

Another phase of the problem is the idea that theology is required to conform to the times. Theology must be made palatable to the modern mood. ". . . Nothing was sought more eagerly than an alliance of theology with the presuppositions of modern secular culture."⁵⁰ It was necessary to re-examine the Bible, compare it with the experience of others and all scientific advances, particularly evolution. We had to believe in continuity, in automatic progress.

The liaison between modern theological education, and our secular culture with its deep commitment to the motif of continuity involves theology in a uniformitarianism which looks forward as well as backward. . . .⁵¹

Evaluation of propounded arguments. How many points-of-view are there basically? In the history of thought, there have been three main points-of-view on the question of religious authority within Christendom. First, the traditional view of Biblical authority, which has been claimed as coming down from the early church. The Apostolic Church, as has been previously noted, held no formulated doctrinal authority, but received the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and ". . . also the life and doctrine of

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 133-134.

⁵⁰Harold B. Kuhn, "The Crisis in Theological Education Today," Asbury Seminary, I (Spring, 1946), p. 3.

⁵¹Kuhn, op. cit., p. 10.

Christ as the final stage of that particular Revelation, together with its fulfillment of prophecy and the new covenant. . ."⁵² Second, the view of a gradually-developed authoritarian Church ruled over by an authoritative papacy, as well as council and tradition. The claim of Rome, of course, is that it has always existed thus, and that the Bible is no authority because it is only the product of the Church's genius. The Bible, according to Rome, cannot be properly interpreted by the average individual, but is only to be considered in the light of church tradition and the decisions of the various popes and councils. Third, the view of modern philosophy, in which thought has been emancipated from the shackles of any authority, and philosophy freed from theology. Authority is believed to be medieval and limiting in its concepts. Man has been found to be autonomous, everything to move on the plane of natural law and all religious truth relative and subject to change and evolutionary explanation.

It is needful that some determination be made relative to these propounded arguments. We must, therefore, decide upon some criteria for determining the truth. Carnell, in his "An Introduction to Christian Apologetics" studies E. S. Brightman's suggested tests for truth. The list includes ten tests: Instinct, Custom, Tradition,

⁵²Barrois, op. cit., p. 5.

Consensus gentium, Feeling, Sense experience, Intuition, Correspondence, Pragmatism and Coherence. The decision made by Carnell as concerning the matter of tradition is:

Tradition is the more normative body of customs. It is the corpus of criteria and standards which has been handed down in a group from early times. The prima facie argument for tradition is that so many people could not be deceived for so long a time. Though it is a favorite argument of the impressively huge Roman Catholic Church, the bubble of tradition can easily be pricked by pointing out that there are in existence so many traditions so conflicting in essentials, that only in a madhouse could they all be justified.⁵³ Since there are admittedly true and false traditions, as Christ pointed out, . . . truth must establish tradition and not tradition truth.⁵³

In a more recent book, his "A Philosophy of the Christian Religion," Carnell discusses the claim of the papacy to infallibility as a guide in matters of religion and tradition.

. . . . When one asks how corrupt popes could have been speaking the mind of Christ, he is told the catholics do not defend the person of the pope; the vicar speaks the mind of Christ only when he is the official interpreter in matters of faith and morals. Thus by one sweep all of the papal abuses are brushed aside. . . . When the individual next inquires who is to determine when a pope actually speaks ex cathedra, the answer is the living pope. But how do we know when the living pope is acting officially and when he is but voicing his own opinion. . . .⁵⁴

⁵³Edward J. Carnell, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 48.

⁵⁴Edward J. Carnell, A Philosophy of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 401-402.

Is not this what is referred to as "reasoning in a circle?" Carnell feels it is necessary to have an interpreter interpret the interpreter when he speaks ex cathedra.

Indeed, Roman Catholics do exercise private judgment when they receive ex cathedra doctrine, or no meaning can be conveyed at all. On just such contradictory grounds, should not the claim of church authority be rejected?

It was necessary next to consider the attitude of so-called "Modern Thought". It has been previously noted that it contained two phases: The idea of feeling in religion as espoused by Schleiermacher, and the power of the human reason as taught by Hegel. On the feeling of dependence as source for religious truth, Doctor Carnell wrote

Feeling is that apperceptive faculty of the soul by means of which one has an inward impression of the state of some object, person, or relation, as when one has a feeling that he is being followed, or a conviction that certain signs of the zodiac portend things to come. Hunches, inspirations, and feelings, however, are little more than subjective suggestions of the soul; they must be screened from without for their truth or error qualities. Some men feel they are Napoleon himself. Others vow that God has told them to chop their right arm off or fast to death. . . Without reason to guide it, feeling is irresponsible. . .⁵⁵

The fact that feelings are not dependable implies that they cannot be any source for truth.

Hegel's plan, according to one modern writer, was that he

⁵⁵Carnell, op. cit., p. 49.

. . . made it his mission in the world to reconcile modern thought with traditional religious ideas, thus 'to give science its due--though subordinate--place in a philosophy which should culminate in religion.' . . .⁵⁶

Hegel actually considered himself Christianity's savior.

His philosophy of history was an attempted historic apologetic for the Christian Religion.

The basis of Hegel's philosophy was his idealism. . . All reality seemed to him ultimately mind, finding its unity in the Absolute Mind. 'Nature,' he wrote, 'is the embodiment of Reason,' . . . and human institutions are based, not on a contract but on the ideal laws of infinite Reason, embedded deep within the universe. History is the unfolding in time of this Absolute Spirit. . .⁵⁷

In the light of the power and influence, of this man, several appraisals of the man Hegel and his thought are presented from the writings of men of different movements:

. . . Hegel never did solve the problem of universality and individuality, of authority and freedom. What he did, basically, was to conceal it behind a smoke screen of ambiguity and abstraction. . . While the Christian can appreciate his sense of the immanent activity of God in history, Hegel's view of God destroyed his transcendence, made Him impersonal, and actually substituted the state for God.⁵⁸

And, speaking of the power of reason, Doctor Kuhn remarked:

⁵⁶ John Stam, "A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of History," Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 108, No. 432, (October-December 1951), p. 459.

⁵⁷ Loc. cit.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 465.

In any case, rational thought is dialectical in character. This being true, even philosophizing is far from being the simple affair that some have thought. It was Kant who called the attention of modern philosophy to this fact--a fact which Plato was well aware, and which he set forth in the Parmenides. The meaning of this for our present discussion is, that reason must, in the light of more recent insights, accept a humbler and more disciplined place than her adherents have claimed for her in her feud with faith.

It is evident, of course, that asserting the limitations of reason as an instrument for achieving truth is one thing; and offering a solution to the problem of reason and faith is quite another. . . .⁵⁹

These statements have been strengthened with material from
Hugh Ross Macintosh:

The Hegelian interpretation of the Christian religion leaves us with a deeper conviction than ever of the impotence of man to force his way through to the presence of God by the power of speculative reason. . . .⁶⁰

The fact must be posited that the average person accepts the Bible as true, as the Word of God, in some particular sense authoritative for Christian people. It has been shown, however, that consensus gentium is an inadequate test of truth.⁶¹ Further, Dr. Brightman has rejected pragmatism or practical consequences as a test

⁵⁹Harold B. Kuhn, "Faith and Reason: A Perennial Problem," Asbury Seminary, Vol. 2, No. 4, (Winter 1947), p. 147.

⁶⁰Macintosh, op. cit., p. 116-117.

⁶¹Edgar S. Brightman, An Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1925), p. 40-41.

for truth.⁶² But, it must be admitted the results of Biblical Christianity have been satisfactory. Lives have been marvelously changed, morals have been improved, sanitation, hospitals and other good works have been inspired. Still, a better test for truth must be found. Brightman maintains that the only valid norm is coherence. This is defined as "systematic consistency". Wherever there is inconsistency, there must be error.

. . . The coherence criterion looks beyond the mere self-consistency of propositions to a comprehensive, synoptic view of all experience. It takes into account all our judgements, as a connected, 'sticking-together' whole. . . Thus the working test of truth is our maximum coherent system of judgments. . .⁶³

Objections have come, but the main ones have been previously well refuted. The objection that coherence leads to only relative truth is denied on the grounds that the Absolute is the Truth. While our concepts (as human beings) may be growing, this does not mean our present knowledge is worthless. It merely means our view is less adequate, less coherent. The objection that ideas may be consistent and yet untrue is refuted on the basis ". . . the only possible way of judging any consistent idea or

⁶²Ibid., p. 55-58.

⁶³Ibid., p. 61.

system to be untrue is by a more careful application of the principle of coherence."⁶⁴

While not all of Doctor Brightman's tests for truth were treated, sufficient study has been made as to cause one to note: First, that applied to Christianity, the Absolute or Truth must be God. The test for truth being considered as coherence, and knowing that God is consistent with Himself and the world, there must be here systematic consistency revealed in the natural order. Second, that God has not only revealed in the world systematic consistency, but ". . . also has committed to writing that portion of the meaning of reality which man must have if he is to adjust himself to God harmoniously and to enjoy eternal life. The Bible was given . . . it tells us how man may be reconciled with God. . . ." ⁶⁵ Third, that while they are not accepted as the criterion for truth, we see that the results of consensus gentium and the pragmatic test appear to be supplementary evidence for the Bible as authoritative.

⁶⁴Brightman, op. cit., p. 65.

⁶⁵Carnell, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics, p. 63.

CHAPTER III

PERTINENCE OF AUTHORITY TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

What home could exist apart from discipline? Can there be homes without central authority? It seems superfluous to remark that there are and have been American homes without perspective regarding home authority. Does this explain some of our present-day juvenile and criminal problems? Certainly, in government there appears to be anarchy and confusion, without discipline or sense of right. In the records of the Hebrew nation, in Biblical reference, there was a time when the Israelites were without established authority or sense of right: "In those days, there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."¹ In this regard, what is the attitude held by professing Christendom concerning authority and its pertinence to Christian life?

I. THE DUAL ASPECTS OF AUTHORITY

In authority as defined in this study, there are two particular aspects which were found to be outstanding: The absolute and the relative. These concepts touch all phases of authority philosophically, but it has been stated that this study treats only religious authority within Christendom.

¹Judges 21:25, A.V.

The concept of the Absolute. Generally, the absolute has been conceived as follows:

In medieval Scholasticism this term was variously used, for example: freed or abstracted from material conditions, hence from contingency, hence applicable to all being; without limitation or restrictions; simply; totally; independent; unconditionally; uncaused; free from mental reservation.

Much of this medieval usage is carried over and expanded in modern philosophy. Absolute and Absolutely signify perfection, completeness, universality, non-relativity, exemption from limitation or qualification, unconditionality; hence also the ineffable, unthinkable; indeterminate; strictly, literally, without reservation, not symbolically or metaphorically . . .²

The term Relative. This concept has been rather technically defined as follows:

A concept is relative if it is . . . a polyadic propositional function, or relation, rather than a monadic propositional function. The term relative is applied especially to words which have been or might be thought to denote monadic propositional functions, but for some reason must be taken as denoting relations. Thus the word short or the notion of shortness may be called relative because as a monadic propositional function it is vague, while as a relation (shorter than) it is not vague . . .³

In more common speech, however, we refer to the term relativism. This is an attitude which holds truth to be variable from individual to individual, from time to time, or without objective standard.

²Dagobert D. Runes, The Dictionary of Philosophy. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1942), p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 269.

The relation of the Absolute and Relative to Christian Life. While these terms are philosophical considerations, they are not disassociated from the Christian life, but are vitally related. In Christian thought, that is, the historical development of dogma within Christendom, the Absolute and Relative have been great contributing factors. It has been previously noted that the problem of religious authority was a gradual development. The Apostolic Church considered it no problem but received the Holy Scriptures of both Testaments as authoritative for faith and life; however, the Medieval Church incorporated tradition, the teaching of the church, councils, and decisions of popes in their authority. The Reformation cast off these accretions, returning to the primacy of the written Word of God only; but, modern philosophy went still further, rejecting also the written Word and making man autonomous.

In Christian thought, the concept of the Absolute was most affected by the German philosophers Kant and Hegel, the immanentist idealists. Theology, as a study, became thoroughly infiltrated with the thinking of these men. Doctor Carl Henry has observed that

. . . Sharing the philosophical emphasis on an intensified divine immanence, the influential continental theologians came to view Christianity as the highest expression of an essence latent in all religions, . . . In the spirit of immanentist idealism, they merged special with general revelation, and blended humanity with God.

The theologians who were influenced most by Hegel obscured Biblical once-for-all revelation; for them, the universal movement of thought provided the most significant disclosure of the Absolute. Those influenced mainly by Kant repudiated it, contending that the categories of thought do not extend to the supernatural; consequently, they faced the problem of overcoming agnosticism about the existence of the religious object . . . On both approaches, however, whether due to a pantheizing divine immanence or to the supposed impossibility of metaphysical knowledge, revelation came to be simply another term for human insight and discovery.⁴

Necessarily, following these philosophies and theologies to their logical conclusion, there is no distinct Christian Absolute. The Holy Scriptures, which claim to be the Revelation of a Holy God, are rejected. If there is no Absolute, there must only be the Relative, the flux and change. We must be relativists, thinking that everything is vague and indefinite unless related to some individual or time-situation. This time-situation may or may not apply to our time situation.

II.

COMPARISON OF THE IDEAS OF DOMINION AND AUTHORITY

The concept of dominion as applied to Christian life.

As has been stated, this term was conceived as sovereignty or domination in the realm of thought--some person or persons

⁴Carl F. H. Henry, Fifty Years of Protestant Theology. (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 16.

or agencies presuming to proscribe for several others their choices and actions. This, of course, is an attempt to eliminate the idea of personal responsibility. The acceptance of some external element as the standard for truth is in itself a moral decision. To the Roman Catholic, the Church has always been the authority, especially as epitomized in the pope; the evangelical Protestant has considered the Bible the objective standard or rule of faith--indeed, the Word of God; to the modern thinker, whether liberal churchman or confessed humanist, the individual has been his own standard. This latter concept, of necessity, is not an objective but rather a subjective standard.

Some thinkers have declared that both the Roman Catholic and the "fundamentalist" Protestant are under domination and evidence non-intelligence. The Roman Catholic is dominated by the Church through its visible head, the pope; the "fundamentalist" is dominated by a paper pope, the Bible. This is a basic misunderstanding of the problem. It is true that both Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants respond to certain authority, but the Protestant response is directed to a purported revelation from God Himself; but the Roman Catholic response is to the purported revelation from God as mediated through another authority--that of the Church. The Protestant receives his authority after reasoning over certain evidences advanced to support the revelation claimed from God. The Roman Catholic accepts the authority of the Church simply

because the Church claims unity, antiquity, and infallibility in all religious matters.

Here is an illustration. The Roman Church has sought to sanctify all of life: Birth, first communion, marriage, death, etc. In the Roman system, therefore, there are seven sacraments. Marriage is one of these. To marriage have been given certain requirements and emphases. Roman Catholic young people must be married in the Roman Church. The law recognizes a civil marriage, but the Church does not. (Note the difference between this and the teaching of Paul that God ordains the powers that be--Romans 13:1). The Church withholds the Mass, the most important part of their system, from Catholics if they are not married in the church. Known personally are two young Roman Catholics who were declared to have "lived in sin" for three years because there was no service within the Church. They were steadfastly kept from the services of the Church until they had promised their Bishop that they would observe another wedding ceremony at a special mass just before Christmas.

The concept of authority as applied to Christian life.

Merely to speak of life as Christian life is to place a qualification upon it which is obvious. It is to make such a distinction as limits certain actions and attitudes to one group of people as Christian, and another group as not distinctly Christian. What is Christian life? What makes it different? There is logical necessity for religious authority.

Every individual decides his authority for himself. He chooses to accept either that which has been taught to him, or something found empirically authoritative, or domination in the field of thought and morals. In any case, a moral decision has been made. It is a decision to believe, to exercise "faith" that such and such a thing is the right thing.

To say that every individual decides for himself his authority does not mean that the authority is any less objective. While the decision may be subjective, that is, reasoning upon the logic and truth or falsity of any proposed standard of conduct and faith, such subjectivity does not do away with the objectivity of the authority.

The Roman Catholic individual receives the teaching of the church as true because the size and power and antiquity of the Church seem to lend themselves to truth. But, size and power and antiquity are hardly the proper criteria for truth. The evangelical Protestant believes the Word of the Scripture to be the Word of God because he has reasoned and believes the claims of the Bible are logical and substantial. On the other hand, the liberal churchman or humanist, operating on certain naturalistic and evolutionary assumptions, rejects the claim of the Bible to be the Revelation of God and authoritative.

The relation of reason to revelation. Operating on the above assumptions, some have denied such a relation to exist, but "Scripture itself appeals to reason. The high ground of faith and knowledge is confidence in God. With the denial of reason would disappear all distinction between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong."⁵

Study of theology indicates that the main service of reason is to judge on evidences which claim to support revelation. No one is asked to believe that which is irrational. Blind acceptance of what has been taught is not faith but is credulity. Evidence comes in various ways. For what is purported historical truth, only historical evidence is satisfactory; for that truth which is considered empirical, the testimony of experience; for moral truth, we need moral evidence; and, of necessity, for Spiritual truth, the demonstration of the Spirit.⁶

Repetition aids understanding and memory. In Chapter 2 which was largely historical, it was noted that certain moral consequences followed decision to accept or reject the Bible or the teaching of the Church. Individuals do not live to themselves, and so decisions made in the realm of thought carry out logically to action in human relationships. If objective standards have been rejected, the "rejector" sets out to enjoy himself whatever happens. Conversely, if one

⁵Hvidding, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶Loc. cit.

accepts some standard as objective, an effort is made to please that person or agency which was the determining authority.

III. IMPLICATIONS

It was believed wise to re-state some of the implications stemming from the various points-of-view which were observed.

First, there was the possibility of anarchy. If there exists no objective standard which brings a valid Weltanschauung,^{7a} everything will be flux and confusion. There may exist anarchy in government, thought, morals, and religion. In this regard, Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants would unite in declaring that there is a valid Weltanschauung: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."⁷ Even though they hold to varying authorities, they would agree upon this principle. This, of course, bears out the idea that underlying a large part of the problem is the assumption by Catholics and evangelical Protestants of the supernatural, as compared with the liberal assumptions of naturalism and evolution.

Second, there is the implication of intolerance. If one rejects valid norms, he may reject those who hold to valid norms. Of course, there is the possibility that one

⁷Colossians 1:17, A. V.

^{7a} Means world view.

who accepts an objective standard may misunderstand or misrepresent its requirements and be intolerant.

Third, every belief held by man finds source in some moral decision which accepts or rejects certain evidences or authority as right. In a recent editorial, the United Evangelical Action said:

Universalists show consistent losses so far as their denominational status is concerned but they are constantly winning new friends in the older churches.

A few weeks ago Bishop Gerald Kennedy of the Methodist Church, addressing the California-Arizona Annual Conference, said: "Speaking of eternal punishment or an everlasting state of agony for the wicked, I am sure God is at least as good and merciful as men. I certainly would not banish any man to a place and state of punishment forever because of his faults or his state of mind when he left this life. I am sure that God is not less fair or merciful than I.

. . . the Methodists are not the only ones who believe it.

Of course the idea does not agree with Bible doctrine but the human mind is the new authority *italics not in the original*⁷. As the Bishop puts it, "I am sure that God is not less fair or merciful than I."⁸

In another vein, we see the same spirit. The fashion designer and hat stylist and hair dresser change skirts, human figures, and hair so as to steadily sell their wares. While, to controvert these continual changes, various of the smaller Christian bodies have gone to extremes and

⁸Editorial, "A New Universalism," United Evangelical Action, X (August 15, 1951), p. 5.

have legislated for their communions. They have made it a moral issue as to how long skirts shall be or how short women's hair should be. This was claimed to have sound basis in Scripture.

A fourth implication is found in the field of education. An article in the *Atlantic Monthly* enlarges upon the apparent disparity between objective authority and modern education. ". . . In my college days, I had no courses in religion, and the church and Sunday School I continued to attend were extremely nonintellectual."⁹ Many colleges and universities, founded primarily for the spread of the Christian faith, have totally revised their original aims and objectives for the students. These schools now place little emphasis upon the Gospel if any. Archbishop Temple is quoted as saying that Wesley preached salvation through the precious blood--a theme which Hume and his friends would have thought ill-suited for refined conversation.¹⁰ Hume's friends are still of the same mind.

Two widely divergent concepts of education have recently been presented. First was the Harvard Report on "General Education In A Free Society". This report stated its problem in two characteristic facets of democracy: ". . . its

⁹C. Leslie Glenn, "Why I Read The Bible," The Atlantic Monthly, CLXXVI, No. 3 (September, 1945), 64.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 65.

creativity, sprung from the self-trust of its members; the other, its exposure to discord and even to fundamental divergence of standards precisely because of this creativity, the source of its strength."¹¹ Later came "Christian Education in a Democracy," the Report of the Committee of the National Association of Evangelicals. The viewpoint of their studies is that ". . . the fact remains that the only criterion for the path education must take is neither popularity nor 'modernity,' but eternal truth."¹² Particular exception was taken to the statement by the Harvard Committee that ". . . whatever one's views, religion is not now for most colleges or universities a practicable source of intellectual unity."¹³ Underlying these concepts are philosophical assumptions which dominate and legislate the thinking of both committees. Such implications as above noted are most serious and need to be considered if we are to help our society to properly adjust its thinking and its living.

¹¹"General Education In A Free Society," Report of the Harvard Committee, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 3-4.

¹²"Christian Education in a Democracy," Report of the N.A.E. Committee, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 8.

¹³Harvard Committee, op. cit., p. 39.

CHAPTER IV

TREATMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY
IN CERTAIN CURRENT AMERICAN THOUGHT

"Is this problem of religious authority practical today?"

The question appears superfluous. Study seems to indicate that the present expression or formulation of these varying points-of-view is quite largely the same as it has always been. There were three main positions, although a fourth has arisen within the past quarter-century. This new position is known as Neo-orthodoxy, or the New Orthodoxy. The thinkers of this movement are referred to as the Crisis or Dialectical theologians. In this chapter, the four positions have been considered in the light of their representation by one of their outstanding exponents. Each representative has been introduced by a brief informational sketch.

I. THE CHURCH AS THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. This prelate is an outstanding present-day philosopher. Born in El Paso, Illinois, in 1895, his life has been filled with academic studies. He is the holder of several earned and honorary degrees. In 1926, Doctor Sheen was awarded the Cardinal Mercier prize for International Philosophy. This was the first time it had ever been awarded to an American. He has been a very successful radio preacher since 1930. Bishop Sheen has also written over twenty-five books.

The material covered in this study. As indicated in the introduction, each thinker has contributed three works. For the position of the Roman Church, Doctor Sheen has furnished the following books: "Old Errors And New Labels" which is a book that has had several reprintings; "God And Intelligence In Modern Philosophy" which was one of his earlier and much weightier books; and "Philosophy Of Religion" written in 1948.

Pertinent observations. Fulton J. Sheen, just as other living Roman Catholic scholars, is totally committed to the Church of the Middle Ages. As was previously noted, the Roman Church literally canonized Thomas Aquinas and his philosophy. The Scholastic Philosophy of the medieval church is the philosophy of the twentieth century.

To a very great extent, the Roman Church is ruled not by a theology, but by a philosophy. This philosophy has crystallized the thinking of its priesthood and its laity. Doctor Sheen presents clearly the Church attitude as he writes: "The Church loves controversy, and loves it for two reasons; because intellectual conflict is informing, and because she is madly in love with rationalism. The great structure of the Catholic Church has been built up through controversy."¹ He does not understand why the Church is accused of being the enemy of reason. The Church condemned

¹Fulton J. Sheen, Old Errors And New Labels (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Incorporated, 1937), p. 7.

traditionalism, fideism, and ontologism because all three refused to use reason.

. . . She wanted rationalists to meet rationalists, thinkers to meet thinkers, and reason to challenge reason; and that is why the Vatican Council of 1870 declared that the human reason by its own power, without the aid of faith or revelation, is able to come to a knowledge of the supreme God.²

In this regard, we find a seeming contradiction of Holy Writ which the Roman Church at least professes to honor. Job declares "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: . . ."³ Paul, in the New Testament, declares that His ways are past finding out.⁴ It would appear, also, that the lives of the heathen in darkened countries of the world do not manifest the power of unaided reason in coming to the knowledge of the Supreme God.

The Roman Church, through her apologists, seems to always cover her mistakes and errors in the scientific realm. Yet, she is quick to charge the fundamentalist with an unscientific faith and an insecure authority. Noticeable in the writing of Doctor Sheen was the fact that he would attack evolution in one section of his work, and yet tolerated such concepts in other sections. It would appear from this that the Roman Catholic Church adjusts herself to many contradicting theories.

²Fulton J. Sheen, Philosophy Of Religion. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 67-68.

³Job 37:23a, A. V.

⁴Romans 11:33c, A. V.

The main issue about the Bible is "what was logically prior?" The Protestant asserts that the Scriptures were prior. The Romanist, however, as represented by Fulton J. Sheen declares:

. . . The fundamental problem, then, is not what the Book says, but who gathered the books together; who decided that it would begin where it does, and leave off where it does; who decided that certain books presumably written by contemporaries of Christ would not be included, and other books written later on would be included. When one answers these questions one has gone beyond the Book to an organization or a Church that, as the continued life of Christ on earth, decided that the Bible was inspired, and which from that day on has decided the meaning of its passages, just as in another way the Supreme Court of the United States decides the meaning of difficult passages in the Constitution of the United States.⁵

There appears to be a very clear understanding of today's problem in thought, for the new ideas of God are expressed as being ". . . in a word, the 'transfer of the seat of authority from God to man.'"⁶ The attitude cited here is clearly that of the so-called autonomous man.

In his "God And Intelligence In Modern Philosophy," Doctor Sheen takes up some of the new approaches to God's existence. The main modern substitutes for the intellectual proofs are religious experience and intuition, although the hypothesis of faith enters here. The faith mentioned

⁵Old Errors, op. cit., p. 308-309.

⁶Fulton J. Sheen, God And Intelligence In Modern Philosophy. (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925), p. 1.

here must not be considered in the traditional sense. Faith ". . . is a sum of possibilities or a hypothesis to be confirmed, or else the practical acceptance of some hypothesis which appears more apt than others to satisfy our needs, tendencies and hopes . . ." ⁷ The definitions of the other approaches are as follows:

Religious experience . . . properly so called, is a certain experience of God in the heart of man, thanks to which God is attained without a reasoning process and with a certitude stronger than that attaching to scientific truth . . . ⁸

Intuition . . . transcends the intellect, which is accused of distorting reality and cutting it up into lifeless fragments . . . ⁹

Religious experience and intuition are said to share the denial of the necessity of reason in attaining the knowledge of God.

The charge has been made by many (among them Edward J. Carnell) that the Roman Church was not truly rationalistic but empirical in its approach to truth. To this, Doctor Sheen answers

. . . The intellect does not see the particular. But our senses do That is the purpose of our senses. And the intellect, by conversion to phantasms and by reflection, can turn back upon the individuals and apply the

⁷Ibid., p. 27.

⁸Ibid., p. 25.

⁹Ibid., p. 26.

universal idea to them. Why criticize the intellect for a function which is supplied by that which is its necessary accompaniment in our present stage of existence, namely, the senses. Such a criticism of the intellect is equivalent to forswearing the use of knives because we cannot sew with them. We have a needle for sewing and a knife for cutting, and one does not exclude the other.¹⁰

The Roman Church accepts Divine Revelation, but adds tradition and decisions of the councils and popes. In effect, this is the reduction of the authority of Scripture to a very minor place. It is readily possible to see how the Church misunderstands the principle of Protestantism known as "Individual interpretation", and thus exerts domination over the minds of the faithful.¹¹ Doctor Sheen compares the two natures of the historical Jesus Christ to the human and divine elements in the Church. In this way, he intends to show that " . . . the voice of one [the Church] is the voice of the other Christ , and the life of one is the life of the other . . . " ¹² Thus it is possible for the Church to be

. . . not only more fundamental than Fundamentalism, but she is also more Modern than Modernism, because she has a memory that dates back over twenty centuries; and therefore she knows that what the world calls modern

¹⁰Ibid., P. 115.

¹¹Supra, p. 55. (See footnote 5).

¹²Old Errors, op. cit., p. 239-240.

¹³Ibid., p. 78.

is really very ancient--that is, its modernity is only a new label for an old error.¹³

The Church misunderstands the distinction between faith and reason. An unusual doctrine was developed. In thinking, we close our eyes to sense knowledge in order to bask in the pure light of reason. This is compared with closing the eyes to the sunlight to better enjoy it later. For a moment, the truth of our material vision of the universe is doubted, and we wink our eyes mentally to rise to higher comprehension.¹⁴

. . . After a study, then a wink, then a doubt about the finality of reason, then a suspicion that there is a higher light, and then, aided by grace, the ascent to Faith. Once on those heights, then open the eyes, call up reason to verify, understand, apply those mysteries of faith to the world of reason and sense. . . Thus Faith is interpreted sometimes by Reason, and Reason holds up the hands of Faith until that last great temporary wink comes in the sleep of death, when we reopen our eyes to the unveiled vision of the Truth, which is God, . . .¹⁵

The Church claims to be tolerant of men, but intolerant of ideas that are bad. The following is quite startling:

. . . the Church discourages bad thinking, for a bad thought set loose is more dangerous than a wild man. Thinkers live; toilers die in a day. When society finds it is too late to electrocute a thought, it electrocutes the man. There was once a time when Christian society burned the thought in order to save society, and after all, something can be said in favor of this practice . . .¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 39-40.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 11.

This study indicates that the Roman Church has not modified its basic position. It asserts the same view of religious authority taught in the Middle Ages. The Church is the authority.

II. THE INDIVIDUAL AS THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

As earlier noted, there are today four positions concerning religious authority. It is believed, however, that study has justified combining the Liberal position with the Neo-orthodox position as one historical group. For this reason, they are regarded as sharing common ground on the question of religious authority.

The Liberal Position. This is represented by Charles Clayton Morrison, formerly editor of the Christian Century, a prominent Protestant magazine.

Charles Clayton Morrison. Born on December 4, 1874, at Harrison, Ohio, Doctor Morrison has given service for many years to the Disciples of Christ. He has earned degrees in undergraduate and graduate work, together with several honorary doctorates. He has been lecturer on Christian and Public Affairs at the Chicago Theological Seminary for many years; and was also delegate to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 and a widely-recognized religious leader. He authored several books and collaborated on a Christian hymnal.

The material studied. Doctor Morrison's contributed books were his "The Meaning of Baptism" written in 1914;

"The Social Gospel and the Christian Cultus", a series of lectures delivered for the Rauschenbusch Lectureship Foundation in 1932; and "The Christian and the War", a series of editorials which appeared in the Christian Century in 1942.

Movement in thought. Study of Morrison's work seems to indicate that there has been some change in his thought since he first wrote. In "The Meaning of Baptism", he seems to make much more room for authority in Scripture than he does in his later works. Nowhere, however, does he define the authority of Scripture. Where he presents it, he links it with the authority of Christ.¹⁷

When speaking of progress some years later, he wrote:

But religion has never consciously taken this principle of progress to its bosom. This is due to its preoccupation with the idea of authority. . . . The faith of religion was once for all delivered to the saints--and the instinct of conservatism has extended the concept of "faith" to include the whole system of the cultus. This principle of arbitrary authority has operated to consolidate religion, as science and the arts have not been consolidated. In our day, the principle of sacrosanct authority in religion is loosening its hold upon us, and the door is opening through which the principle of progressive change may enter into the body of religion¹⁸ . . .

¹⁷Charles Clayton Morrison, The Meaning of Baptism (Chicago: Disciples Publication Society, 1914), p. 6.

¹⁸Charles Clayton Morrison, The Social Gospel and the Christian Cultus. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1933), p. 89.

Earlier, he feared he was not speaking strongly enough, nor radically enough. Christian thought had undergone a revolution. Theology and ethical systems which are no longer valid cannot continue to be utilized.

. . . The new world view which science opened up in the nineteenth century has been steadily displacing the world view which, with but slight modifications, dominated human thought from the beginning days of Christianity . . . we are sure that the outlines of the older universe do not fit, and that they will never fit, the realities of which we are now aware.¹⁹

Doctor Morrison realized that the lay mind was disquieted by these changes, and the unity of the church was imperiled. It was more important, however, to have the Social Gospel than to worry about the problems of higher criticism and Fundamentalist attacks.

. . . The educated clergy who espoused the new view of the Bible were able to demonstrate by their practical use of the Bible that all the essential values for which the Bible stood under the traditional conception of its origin, were conserved and even enhanced under the historic-critical conception of its origin. The field has likewise been cleared of the belligerent Fundamentalists because the Modernists have been able to show that the abandonment of a particular theory of the origin of the world and the adoption of another theory jeopardized no essential religious value, but rather enhanced the age-old values of the Christian faith and cleared the air for their more clear envisagement. . . .²⁰

¹⁹Ibid., p. 54-55.

²⁰Ibid., p. 26.

Would it be unfair to inquire just what values are enhanced? Just what is the distinctively Christian cultus? Surely, Western Civilization, as we know it, is the logical outcome of the Evangelical Faith, or as was noted in the Introduction--conservatism in thought. To do away with evangelical Christianity and its "distinct" characteristics is to completely lose the essence of Christianity. Indeed, Doctor J. Gresham Machen has written

As a matter of fact, however, . . . it may appear that what the liberal theologian has retained after abandoning to the enemy one Christian doctrine after another is not Christianity at all, but a religion which is so entirely different from Christianity as to belong in a distinct category²¹ . . . a vague religion . . .

How could such an attitude toward the traditional source of authority for Protestantism be developed? The following is quite suggestive:

I must emphasize this fact--the fact that our seminaries, those seed-beds in which our whole present-day Christian ministry is grown--have become distinctly socialized in their conception of religion. I doubt if it is generally realized how far our seminaries have gone in their commitment to the social gospel. One cannot name a northern Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian seminary, or a Congregational or Disciples seminary, in which the social gospel is not taken for granted. I am unable to think of a single seminary representing any of these denominations where, to use a rough but revealing test, the teaching of Walter Rauschenbusch would not be,

²¹J. Gresham Machen, Christianity And Liberalism. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p. 6..

in its main outline and substance, recognized as a sound interpretation of the Gospel. . . .²²

It is empirically true, as well as rationally, that where no set standard exists, confusion abounds. In "The Christian and the War", Charles Clayton Morrison notes that when Karl Barth, Swiss Theologian, advocated war with Hitler, he returned to the liberal-rejected Old Testament idea of God punishing the wicked. ". . . We cannot conceive the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as dividing himself into many tribal deities and commanding each tribe or nation to go forth and slay the people of other tribes or nations . . ."²³ This is "pure" Old Testament Higher Criticism, improperly so-called. This is placing the Old Testament in distinct opposition to the New Testament.

The concept of a tribal god ordering the destruction of various peoples, coldly and without proper reason, is not true to Scripture. In the first place, there is the assumption that the idea of God was slowly evolved in Hebrew thinking; and in the second place, that the Christ of the New Testament is of different nature from the "Old Testament bully" known as Jehovah God. The tribal god concept is only a figment of liberal Protestantism's imagination. Whenever the God of the Old Testament ordered the Israelites to destroy nations, it was because He had tolerated their sin as long as He could.

²²The Social Gospel, op. cit., p. 15.

²³Charles Clayton Morrison, The Christian and the War. (New York: Willett, Clark & Company, 1942), p. 37-38.

In those instances, many opportunities for repentance had been given, but they did not mend their ways. At God's destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked: ". . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"²⁴

The position of the Christian Century, at the outbreak of war, was basically pacifist. Seemingly, for this position, the Christian Century (as edited by Doctor Morrison) found support in Scripture. It is passing strange that Scripture becomes authoritative when we want it to do so. In an editorial called "War Is Not Sin; It Is Hell", he wrote:

. . . Hell is that realm or condition or situation--call it what you will--temporary or enduring--here or hereafter--where good and evil have lost their distinction, where evil is good and good is evil. This is precisely what war is, and total war answers this description in amazingly full detail.²⁵

This is an amazing confusion of terms and ideas. It may be true that hell is like the above, but that is only half of the truth. The solemn truth taught in the Scriptures is that

. . . those who reject Christ and the salvation offered through Him, shall die in their sins and be separated from God forever. Many learned men have sought to explain away this truth as contrary to the goodness of God, but the simple fact still remains that God is not

²⁴Genesis 18:25b, A. V.

²⁵Christian and War, op. cit., p. 53.

mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7, 8). This present life is one of probation, and following it must be the eternal consequences. This is no more than simple justice, and every person of sincerity must admit that the principles here laid down are eternally just.²⁶

Every decision in the realm of thought is a moral decision. Jesus made this very plain, even in conversation with a moral and religious leader, Nicodemus. Jesus taught that

. . . every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.²⁷

In this same regard, Jesus declared to the Pharisees, of which sect Nicodemus was a member, that they worshipped him in vain, " . . . teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."²⁸ It appears that this is exactly what is done when the individual is the sole authority.

The Neo-orthodox position. This is simply a new orthodoxy. It is not, however, the orthodoxy of conservatives in theology. The Crisis theologians or dialectical theologians

²⁶H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, Vol. 3. (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1943), p. 367-368.

²⁷John 3:20-21, A. V.

²⁸Mark 7:7, A. V.

(Neo-orthodox) affirm that they are the true interpreters of the Reformers: Luther and Calvin. They assert that conservative or evangelical Protestantism has perverted the teaching of the Reformers. This is denied by both conservative and liberal thinkers.

Reinhold Niebuhr. The outstanding exponent of American or "Anglo-Saxon" Neo-orthodoxy, as compared with "Continental" or Barthian Neo-orthodoxy, is Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr was born in Wright City, Missouri, on June 21, 1892. A widely-traveled, well-read educator, he has many friends on both sides of the Atlantic. He has been Professor of both Philosophy of Religion and Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, for several years. He has written very prolifically, and lectured in many colleges and universities. He was Gifford Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh in 1939. He calls himself "a chastened liberal".

The Source material. As with the other authors, he has contributed three books to this study: "An Interpretation of Christian Ethics" written in 1935, when he was first attracting attention intellectually; "The Nature and Destiny of Man" in two volumes, the Gifford Lectures for 1939; and "Faith And History" which is his philosophy of history, and was written in 1949.

The starting point. Niebuhr starts with man. He follows the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard very

closely in his anthropology and psychology. Man has a double environment (a bi-world) creating within him complexity and tension over the matter of time and eternity. Man is a child of nature, and is subject to its whims, under necessity, limited to only a few years, completely finite. However, man is also free spirit, outside of nature, and himself, and his world. He is self-transcending, even space and time. Man is also a unity of body and soul in one whole, unique individual or personality. It is a paradox how man can be both limited and free, but it is so.²⁹

Certain presuppositions. Edward J. Carnell examines Niebuhr's theology critically to find that his epistemology is liberal, especially with regard to the Bible. The Bible does not contain God's plenarily-inspired will for man, as in orthodoxy, but rather a salvation history or Heilsgeschichte. This Heilsgeschichte is to be appropriated critically through depth experience.

. . . Older liberalism had found in the Bible a normative statement for valid religious experience. Neo-orthodoxy simply enlarges this epistemology to discover in the Bible a normative statement for valid existential tension . . .³⁰

In his treatment of the conflict between grace and pride, Niebuhr very clearly says

²⁹Delbert R. Rose, Lectures delivered at Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, 1951.

³⁰Edward J. Carnell, The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 57.

The Reformation insistence upon the authority of Scripture, as against the authority of the Church, bears within it the perils of a new idolatry. Its Biblicism became, in time, as dangerous to the freedom of the human mind in searching out causes and effects as the old religious authority.⁷ But rightly conceived Scriptural authority is meant merely to guard the truth of the gospel in which all truth is fulfilled and all corruptions of truth are negated.⁷ This authority is Scriptural in the sense that the Bible contains the history, and the culmination in Christ, of that Heilsgeschichte in which the whole human enterprise becomes fully conscious of its limits, of its transgressions of those limits, and of the divine answer to its problems. . . .³¹

This is a definite misunderstanding of the place of Scripture as authority. His statement, that Biblicism is dangerous to the freedom of the human mind, indicates quite clearly his following Kantian thought with its insistence upon the "autonomous" man.

Further in its development, his argument goes:

. . . When the Bible becomes an authoritative compendium of social, economic, political and scientific knowledge it is used as a vehicle of the sinful sanctification of relative standards of knowledge and virtue which happen to be enshrined in a religious canon.³²

It is hard to see how the Scriptures as an authoritative compendium could be used to sanctify "relative standards". Indeed, the whole claim of Scripture is that it is the truth.

³¹Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. 2. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 152.

³²Loc. cit.

The Scriptures claim to come from God who is Ultimate, Eternal, Unchanging Truth. If this claim is valid, relative standards are out of the question.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.³³

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.³⁴

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.³⁵

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.³⁶

Doctor Niebuhr also presupposes that history necessitates Special Revelation to interpret it and solve the problem of evil in society and history.³⁷ The flux of history has some other meaning than that which he can give it because he is involved in it as a creature. Actually, the center, source, and end of the historical process is faith which is more powerful than the human agent and more omniscient than

³³Hebrews 6:18, A. V.

³⁴Hebrews 13:8, A. V.

³⁵James 1:17, A. V.

³⁶John 14:7, A. V.

³⁷Rose, op. cit.

human observers. We find some wisdom of faith even in the most primitive and totemistic histories of tribes and clans, but we find universal expression of this in Biblical faith. Biblical faith is considered

. . . a religion of both history and revelation, able to affirm the meaning of historical existence in its unity because it discerns by faith revelations of the center of its meaning, beyond coherences of nature and the rationally ambiguous coherences of history. Man's historic existence can not have meaning without faith . . .³⁸

A further presupposition concerns the Imago dei which is not a psychological literalism but man's full and yet finite freedom explained in his vertical relation to the infinite, personal will of God. Man is at the same time self-determined by God and yet self-determining in choosing God. (This concept has been brought over from Soren Kierkegaard).

History is the fruit and the proof of man's freedom. Historical time is to be distinguished from natural time by the unique freedom which enables man to transcend the flux of time, holding past moments in present memory and envisaging future ends of actions which are not dictated by natural necessity.³⁹

Evil or sin in the will arises when man refuses the creaturely limits of finitude, pretending to be more than he is. This

³⁸Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith And History. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 57.

³⁹Ibid., p. 55.

human freedom is not, therefore, absolute. If it were, human action would create a confused realm. If all patterns and structures of history or nature were absolute, human freedom would be annulled.

Niebuhr, however, is best known as an ethicist. His book "An Interpretation of Christian Ethics" shows clearly his attitude toward any solid standard for morals.

. . . Orthodox Christianity, . . . cannot come to the aid of modern man, partly because its religious truths are still imbedded in an outmoded science and partly because its morality is expressed in dogmatic and authoritarian moral codes . . .⁴⁰

Further, he writes:

The weakness of orthodox Christianity lies in its premature identification of the transcendent will of God with canonical moral codes, many of which are merely primitive social standards, and for development of its myths into a bad science . . .⁴¹

His concept of myth is not that of fairy tale, but rather a story, which while not true still has great spiritual meaning.

His liberal basis, regarding the Bible's development, causes him to seriously question the importance of some Scripture teaching. In speaking of Christ's command to the young disciple to "let the dead bury the dead", he states

. . . Surely this is not an ethic which can give us specific guidance in the detailed problems of social morality where the relative claims of family, community, class, and nation must be constantly weighed . . .⁴²

⁴⁰Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1935), p. 4.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 8-9.

⁴²Ibid., p. 51.

He refers quite often to Jesus as having an "interim ethic", although he believes that

There is, nevertheless, an eschatological element in, and even basis for, the ethic of Jesus. The ethical demands made by Jesus are incapable of fulfillment in the present existence of man . . .⁴³

Sin has its setting in anxiety, climaxing in death. Existentially, sin is man's attempt to find security outside the tension of the dialectical relation between time and eternity. While sin is not necessary, it is inevitable due to man's double environment. (Sin becomes security).

Here we have the logical consequences of being adrift without a rudder. Having no authority, man is caught in endless contradictions and error. Denying an objective authority destroys coherence or systematic consistency in other realms.

. . . The myth of the Fall is made into an account of the origin of evil, when it is really a description of its nature . . . Original sin is not an inherited corruption, but it is an inevitable fact of human existence, the inevitability of which is given by the nature of man's spirituality . . .⁴⁴

Of course, this spirituality is not that referred to in the Scriptures. His thought does step forward from pure liberalism, but he is still caught in a faulty, Kantian epistemology which seeks to make him autonomous in thought and conduct. He uses evangelical terms, but they are filled with philosophical concepts.

⁴³Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 90.

III. THE BIBLE AS THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

Carl F. H. Henry. Born in 1913, and a native of New York City, this young thinker has had an active life. For several years, he edited Long Island weekly newspapers and served as suburban correspondent for Standard News Association, the New York Herald Tribune and New York Times. His earned degrees are from widely-varied educational institutions. At present, he is professor of Theology and Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. He has served on the faculty of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy of Religion, and as visiting professor of Theology at Wheaton College in Illinois, and Gordon Divinity School, Boston. Since 1946, he has written a large number of religio-philosophical books, and some pamphlets.

The material studied. Of Doctor Henry's works, the following were selected for this study: "Remaking The Modern Mind" written in 1946; "The Protestant Dilemma" written in 1948; and "The Drift of Western Thought", the W. B. Riley Memorial Lectures at Northwestern Schools, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1951.

The major consideration. In the author's words which preface his "Remaking The Modern Mind", we have the major emphasis of his thought as follows:

I have not considered it my task herein to develop the Christian world-life view.

Rather, fired by the evangelical conviction of the adequacy of Biblical theism⁷, I have attempted to indicate that the striking reversals of modern philosophy have been necessitated by non-Christian answers to the cardinal problems of God, man and the universe. Contemporary philosophy's extremity is historic Christianity's opportunity.⁴⁵

Doctor Henry has stated his underlying assumption. He believes that the Revelation of God in Christ is absolutely essential to meet today's problems.

The testimony of the Spirit and an authoritative Bible. Error is always possible when the written and the Living Word are separated. For one in the Presence of the Lord, there is perfect knowledge of the Living Word. To one still in the human body,

. . . the sin principle runs too deeply through the believer's life--even that of the sanctified believer--to relate him to the Living Word in over-divorce from the written word. True, the Living Word is Jesus Christ; to Him, the Holy Spirit testifies, and this testimony makes the written word "quick and powerful." But the Scriptures themselves do not hesitate to affirm of the writings that they are "the Word". . . The Holy Spirit makes subjectively true to me the objectively true written revelation by revealing Christ through the Book. The knowledge content of revelation is in the written word, but the communion content waits on the Holy Spirit . . .⁴⁶

⁴⁵Henry, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁶Henry, The Protestant Dilemma, op. cit. p. 81-82.

. . . All we know of Christ is conveyed to us through the Scriptures which interpret to us the Living Christ whom the Spirit discloses; we know nothing about Christ beyond the written word except the living experience of Him, and our conviction that it is He depends not alone upon the testimony of the Spirit, but also the witness of the written word which the Spirit enlivens. . . The Spirit persuades us of the truthfulness of Scripture, but it does not replace the objective authority of the written word. The Scripture is the source from which theology is drawn. . .⁴⁷

The Bible is not merely a record of revelation, for it is true that Orthodoxy has always insisted that

. . . the interpretation as well as the event is given and that there is such a thing as revealed truth as well as revealed action. . . The newer view of revelation, on the contrary, distinguishes sharply between the divine events and the apostolic teaching predicated thereon; the kerygma, or "received gospel", is then set off against the elementary didache, intended for all believers, and a higher sophia or gnosis for mature minds . . .⁴⁸

"The chief problem of mid-century thought is the problem of authority. . ."⁴⁹

The problem of authority centers in the query, do we have an authoritative revelation of God, and, if so, is it rightly conceived as a word of God in the traditional sense? If it is not rightly conceived in these terms, how could those to whom any actual revelation came have so misunderstood its inner content? . . .⁵⁰

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 82-83.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 214.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 216-217.

Doctor Henry believes that while the Neo-orthodox champions of special revelation have taken higher ground than the liberals of a generation ago, they are still a long ways away from an adequate view.

. . . They have brought back the Biblical terminology of original sin, of substitutionary atonement, of the wrath of God, but they assure us in the next moment that these are not to be taken literally, but have a symbolic, or parabolic, or figurative reality. . .⁵¹

He asks very fittingly, ". . . how, on such an approach, one can avoid the question whether revelation itself may not be merely a symbolic notion."⁵²

In a more recent work, he remarks that there is real ground for suspicion that

. . . the neo-supernaturalistic view of revelation is not to be identified as Biblical in the orthodox sense. The fact is that theologians like Barth and Brunner refuse to identify the content of revelation with the Bible. They reject, that is, the Reformation view that revelation is inscripturated, that the Scriptures are the divine provision of the Word of God written. . . The content of revelation is thus not anything that is written in the Bible; the content of revelation is communicated only in the divine-human encounter. . .⁵³

Neo-orthodoxy, in fact, has departed from Christianity, in this regard, because it replaces God who has spoken by a God who is speaking.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 217.

⁵²Loc. cit.

⁵³Carl F. H. Henry, The Drift of Western Thought. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 121-122.

Consistent with his premise that the mid-century problem in thought is the problem of authority, Doctor Henry shows that the problem of man is but the problem of authority restated. ". . . It inquires whether human nature and human destiny is such that it requires a divine reference for its source and meaning. What is the human predicament, and what, if any, is the resolution of it?"⁵⁴

The key to the human problem. To searching Protestantism, there is the sure Word of God--the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures.

Is it asking too much of a Liberal tradition, which has so long gloried in its championing of open-mindedness in the search for causes, that it shall once again return to the Scriptures in a frank study of the Biblical record on its own assumptions? Is it possible for Liberalism, increasingly aware of unresolved tensions and inherent contradictions in its present formulation, to inquire whether, in its inadequate views of revelation, of the predicament of man, and of Christ, the failure to arrive at a fully Biblical view does not derive from the inheritance of modern philosophical positions which are already compromised in part by the Liberal movement to higher ground? . . .⁵⁵

A very practical warning is given to the modern mind:

The modern ideology needs to be remade--that is admitted today by those who have shaped it as well as those who have opposed it. But its effective remaking can be accomplished only in a philosophic framework in which rebirth is something more than a change of human temperament, in which indeed it is a divine reversal, a work of regeneration. If the modern mind is not reborn, but merely exchanges one mood for another, we stand only a generation from the fruit of atheism: the pessimism of despair.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Henry, The Protestant Dilemma, op. cit., p. 218.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 224.

⁵⁶Henry, Remaking The Modern Mind, op. cit., p. 301.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the problem. Very briefly stated, there has been a war raging in thought for centuries. Even the question, as to how long religious authority has been a problem, cannot be solved without revealing some personal assumptions and considerations.

As long as man has been on the earth, the problem of knowledge, and in this case religious knowledge, has been acute. How do we know, and what can we know? To one who accepts the Biblical record of creation and the fall of man, it is clear to see how Eve fell before the temptation to know. ". . . your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."¹ We notice immediately that a moral decision had been made to disbelieve God and to choose to believe what the Tempter has said. Always, in thought, we make moral decisions when we believe or reject something.

The early church believed the Revelation of God, receiving the Old Testament in faith, and the life and doctrine of Christ as authority for their faith. The New Testament being not yet written, eye-witnesses spoke or compiled other testimonies for the churches' edification.

The second and third century church, however, began to develop a doctrine of Scripture. There was a confession of faith written by the third century which included the

¹Genesis 3:5b, A. V.

elements of the Apostle's teaching. But, as the church grew, changes began to occur. Errors began to creep into both the faith and the practice of the church. Now, in addition to transmitted Scriptures there was the authority of tradition, and later decisions of councils, and finally authority of one personality designated as "the Vicar of Christ on earth."

The Church developed, and her doctrine developed. Bishop Sheen speaks of the fact that the Church ". . . began thinking on His first principles and the harder she thought, the more dogmas she developed. Being organic like life, . . . she never forgot those dogmas; she remembered them and her memory is tradition. . ."² This is a half truth. The Church did think on the principles of Christ, but her thinking was faulty. It was not grounded on ". . . a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, . . ."³ The Church came into error, and many were defiled. If the Church truly possessed the Spirit of truth as she claims, she would not exist in her present corrupt state.

Throwing off the Church's errors, however, did not assure any one of being right from there on. The Reformers did cast away enough to be free to serve God. They went out with His Word to conquer. Later thinkers, however, tried to throw out the authority of God's Word. Confusion came. It

²Sheen, Old Errors, op. cit., p. 112-113.

³II Peter 1:19b, A. V.

has remained with us ever since. Only when the Inspiring Spirit has quickened hearts to His Word have there been changes in lives.

Personally-reached conclusions. This problem is an old one, but still a present one. History has known three main positions of religious authority: The Church, the individual, the Bible or the Word of God. These main positions are still defended today.

First, the Roman Church. The Church exercises domination of the faithful in many matters. She contradicts herself terribly in many of her rulings. It has opposed "true science" down through the centuries, and many times has come to accept the facts discovered (but secretly). The Copernican theory was listed with the prohibited books for Roman Catholics for nearly 150 years. Finally, all reference to its banning was removed from the index and other authoritative Roman Catholic documents. Still, the Church maintains that evangelical Protestantism is unscientific. The Roman Church is not a unified church actually. It has been filled for centuries with differing religious ideas. Only lip service is actually required of the clergy and the laity in many points. As a matter of fact, many of the laity do exercise private judgment in matters of policy regarding marriage and birth control and similar matters.

Second, the individual. The individual as authority is a concept held by unconverted people, both within and without the Church of Jesus Christ. Liberal Protestantism does not

realize that it is exercising the spirit of humanism, and as Doctor Machen indicated has no right to the name Christian. Liberal thought is controlled simply by the "mores" of society whatever they might be. Everything is relative and nothing absolute, either in conduct or belief. A liberal thinker may believe in heaven because he wants to, and he may reject the idea of hell if he wants to do so. There is no compulsion as to what he must believe. When such concepts have right of way in people's thinking, the civilization collapses due to its lack of moral fibre.

Third, the Bible. Only the Word of God, which the Scriptures claim to be, answers the two questions: What can I know about reality? How can we know? The questions of man can be answered by a theology founded on the Christian Revelation. This revelation of God was given to us both in a general and a special sense. The general revelation is found in the universe which God has created. The special revelation is considered to be the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures in which we find God's purpose and will for mankind. More particularly, of course, we make distinction between special revelation as the written Word of God, and the other as special revelation "in the face of Jesus Christ" the Living Word of God. The Bible consists of sixty-six books authored by the Spirit of God. ". . . holy men of God spake

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."⁴ Further, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, . . ."⁵

The rest of that last text reads: ". . . and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works."⁶ Those doctrines which can be said to be distinctly Christian will be found in the Bible, though they may not be systematically presented. The Bible is not a text in Systematic Theology. The Bible is to be a corrective for improper living. The Bible will instruct us in righteousness. In this God had purpose--He wants us to be perfect "thoroughly" furnished unto all good works.

⁴II Peter 1:21b, A. V.

⁵II Timothy 3:16a, A. V.

⁶II Timothy 3:16b-17, A. V.

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A P P E N D I X

APPENDIX

NOTE A: Roman Catholic Private Judgment

Notation was made concerning the fact that after all decisions of the Papacy have been made, there still exists the spirit of private judgment of Roman Catholics. In fact, observation seems to show that many Roman Catholics do exercise private judgment.

"Until September, 1923, the editorial 'We' had been been used. But then I wrote: 'The word 'We' is misleading. It has been retained until now principally because of traditional custom, but partly because the use of the perpendicular pronoun 'I' might seem egotistic. THE CATHOLIC WORLD is edited by one priest. It is published by a group of priests. It enjoys the approbation of a considerable number of the members of the hierarchy. It is held to be, in a sense, an authoritative organ of the Catholic Church in America. Now, if the editor uses the word 'We,' what does he mean: 'We, the Paulist Fathers'? or 'We, the Catholic clergy'? or 'We, the Catholics of America'? Some of our many non-Catholic readers might even imagine that 'We' means 'We, the Catholic Church.' Of course, 'We,' in the editorial sense, means simply 'We, the editor.'"

"It would be possible, I dare say, to lift the word 'authoritative' out of the above passage and over-emphasize its importance. But a reasonably careful reader will note that the purport of the entire passage is to disclaim authority . . .

" . . . Two or three bishops spoke recently about the anti-third term tradition, and about federal policy in the face of the war. Their words might have been interpreted as favoring one political side, while other bishops seemed to be on the other side. In neither case could the expression of the bishop's opinion be taken as a statement of the united hierarchy, still less of the Catholic Church.

"As with priests and bishops, so with editors. We do not agree. It is well that we do not. Since we don't agree and everybody knows that we don't agree, no one of us can make pretense to speak for all. . . . St. Augustine said it long ago, In necessariis unitas: in dubiis libertas; which may be freely translated, 'In matters of faith there is unity; in matters not of faith, liberty.' . . .

"I have a suspicion that those who demand that a priest 'stick to the Gospel' would not consistently apply that maxim in all cases. If a priest happens to think as they do and say what they say, they take his opinions and utterances as a legitimate interpretation of philosophical principles. . . ."

While Augustine did hold that we have liberty in matters not of faith, the Papacy claims it holds authority in both faith AND morals. The Roman clergy and laity have no freedom, therefore, to speak or hold opinions in such matters. When they do, they exercise private judgment.

NOTE B.: COMPARISON OF OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE AUTHORITY

In The Infallible Word, a symposium by members of the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, John Murray wrote:

"The thesis maintained . . . in our examination of the objective witness is that Scripture is authoritative by reason of the character it possesses as the infallible Word of God and that this divine quality belongs to Scripture because it is the product of God's creative breath through the mode of plenary inspiration by the Holy Spirit. The rejection of such a position has appeared to many to involve no impairment of the divine authority of the Bible, because, even though the infallibility of Scripture has to be abandoned, there still remains the ever abiding and active witness of the Holy Spirit, and so infallible authority is fully conserved in the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. Scripture is authoritative, it is said, because it is borne home to the man of faith by the internal testimony of the Spirit.

". . . The Barthian view is that Scripture is authoritative because it witnesses to the Word of God; it is the vessel or vehicle of the Word of God to us. In that respect, Scripture is said to be unique and in that sense is called the Word of God. But what makes Scripture really authoritative, on this view, is the ever-recurring act of God, the divine decision, whereby, through the mediacy of Scripture, the witness of Scripture to the Word of God is borne home to us with ruling and compelling power. The Scripture is not authoritative

¹Editorial, "By What Authority?", The Catholic World, CLIII, No. 909, (December, 1940), 257-259.

antecedently and objectively. It is only authoritative as here and now, to this man and no other, in a concrete crisis and confirmation, God reveals himself through the medium of Scripture. Only as there is the ever-recurring human crisis and divine decision does the Bible become the Word of God.

"It is apparent, therefore, that for the Barthian the authority-imparting factor is not Scripture as an existing corpus of truth given by God to man by a process of revelation and inspiration in past history, not the divine quality and character which Scripture inherently possesses, but something else that must be distinguished from any past action and from any resident quality. The issue must not be obscured. Barth does not hold and cannot hold that Scripture possesses binding and ruling authority by reason of what it is objectively, inherently and qualitatively.

" . . . it does not eliminate the issue . . . there still remains the fact, that, on Barthian presuppositions, it is not the divine quality inherent in Scripture nor the divine activity by which that quality has been imparted to it that makes Scripture authoritative. That past activity and the resultant quality may constitute the pre-requisites for the authority by which it becomes ever and anon invested, but they do not constitute that authority. It is rather the ever-recurring act of God that is the authority-constituting fact. This ever-recurring activity of God may be conceived of as the internal testimony of the Spirit and so it is this testimony that constitutes Scripture authoritative. . .

" . . . It is, however, by 'the inward word of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts' that we become convinced of that authority. The authority of Scripture is an objective and permanent fact residing in the quality of inspiration; the conviction on our part has to wait for that inward testimony by which the antecedent facts of divinity and authority are borne in upon our minds and consciences. It is to confuse the most important and eloquent of distinctions to represent the former as consisting in the latter."²

²The Infallible Word, a Symposium by members of the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Company, 1946), p. 40-44.