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# A Philosophy of Religious Authority

G. Richard Powell

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A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

by

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**CHAPTER I**

**PREFACE**

## CHAPTER I

### PREFACE

To say that the enigma of religious authority is at the very center of existence may impress an individual as an unimaginative way of commencing a writing. However that may be, the truth is unalterable that what an individual thinks about religion is the axis of his own world. The climate of the rational disposition of any man is prejudiced by his opinion of ultimate Authority. These pages are appropriated to a penetrating survey of the vindicative grounds of Christianity as religious authority.

#### I. THE AREA OF STUDY DEFINED

The object of this study is to explore the philosophical basis of religious authority. The intent is to set forth an apology for the pre-eminence of the Christian faith according to the popularly-designated "evangelical" interpretation. There is recognized in the oft-repeated usage of the term "evangelical" within ecclesiastical circles a certain ambiguity of understanding. The purpose of its employment here is to establish a working basis with the intention that particular distinctions will become apparent in the text of the study.

By philosophical is not meant speculative study at the

expense of pragmatic issues involved. Metaphorically we may express this dual demand of the philosophy of religious authority, namely (1) that the credentials of one's faith are no more cogent than the veracity of the authorizing agency, and (2) that one's faith cannot partake of virility if its taproots pass only through the arid soil of mental exercises. The implication of these figures is that one must have a substantial foundation in a faith that is commensurate in accessibility to the most humble intellect as well as to the prodigious mentality.

However, inasmuch as the scope of this study is intensive rather than extensive, the reader is invited to co-operate by extending the principles of the thesis to practical issues peculiar to his own thinking. This study serves only to introduce the problem of religious authority.

As has been previously suggested, this writing is committed to the postulate of the supremacy of Christianity above ethnic religions and cultures. This being predominantly an apologetic pursuit, and not historical nor comparative with other religious systems, no sections of the work are devoted exclusively to the contrastive or reflective elements. History of doctrine finds its way into these pages wherever its presence works an advantage toward explicating problems under consideration.

In preface to the main text the present author assumes that religious consciousness, however primitive or complex, is innate in human nature. H. Orton Wiley in his Christian Theology explains:

"The existence of God is a first truth, and must logically

precede and condition all observations and reasoning. Men reach conviction on this subject apart from scientific discussion. To the great mass of men the theistic arguments are unknown, and to many others they do not carry the conviction of certainty. These arguments will therefore be presented as confirmatory proofs of the existence of God, and will be useful in showing the approach of the human mind in its attempt to grasp and explain its belief in the Divine Existence."<sup>1</sup>

A former president emeritus of Evangelical Theological Seminary, S. J. Gamertsfelder, has declared that "man has a religious nature by native endowment. He is a religious being by creation. . . . The first and most fundamental element of man's religious nature is his idea of God."<sup>2</sup>

It is readily observed that serious and worthy problems present themselves in such postulations as these: e.g., what of confessed atheists and such persons as disclaim any certainty of conviction, or the possibility of it? To questions such as these the main burden of this study is directed.

The question of religious authority, simply stated, is, "Who says so?", or, "By what right?", when confronted with duty. More abstractly it might be formed to echo the unwittingly epigrammatic question of Pontius Pilate, "What is truth?"<sup>3</sup> The acknowledgment of Truth is connascent with the acknowledgment of Authority.

The pursuit of the subject of religious authority leads to an examination of the Source of Truth, coincidentally and frequently

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<sup>1</sup>H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), p. 217.

<sup>2</sup>S. J. Gamertsfelder, Systematic Theology (Harrisburg, Pa.: Evangelical Publishing House, 1952), pp. 45, 46.

<sup>3</sup>John 18:38.

denominated the Ultimate. If the Ultimate is abstruse, is knowledge of Truth possible or probable? Another question which must be entertained is, "Why is Truth truth?", or, in other words, "What is truthness?" In what does truth partake of its essence? An alternate term which will find frequent usage in these pages because of its cognateness with truth is "morality".

The involvements in a philosophy of religious authority are manifold, having their extension into every avenue and corridor of knowledge. Indeed, they revert beyond personal knowledge and experience to the very beginnings of humanity, and as we shall attempt to show, into that Existence which was the very Fount of all existence. Moreover, the idea of authority requires a continuity into and throughout the days of our posterity, and this requirement projects itself to the End, if there be such. Thus in the present study, the inquiry must encounter ontology, the study of the nature of Being, and teleology, the study of the nature of Design, and epistemology, the study of the nature of knowledge. Theism, Christology, revelation, and other specialized areas must receive either major or incidental treatment in the approach to a credible philosophy of religious authority. May it be offered in brief that the issue of religious authority is as comprehensive as the Christian theology, in particular, and as expansive as the Universe, in general.

And now, lest the present writer seem to display confidence overmuch in a spacious problem area, let it be admitted that issues undoubtedly inhere in the question of religious authority that have

not come to mind. Moreover, it may be found to be necessary simply to raise legitimate questions and confess inability to adequately resolve them within these pages.

## II. ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE

The main text of this thesis is organized into four chapters.

Chapter two, entitled "The Phenomenon of Authority", presents those aspects of the subject of authority which are observable and experimental. Attention is given to the organization of human society within a definite framework of mutual obligation. The juridical branches of society, the institutions of home and school, the relationships between governor and the governed, between the state and its populace, in fact the orientation of the Universe in conformity to standards is explored as evidences of a structure of authority. The direction of this chapter is basically pragmatic.

Chapter three, "The Structure of Religious Authority", aspires to encompass the nature of the problems within the subject, defining initially the term which is repetitive by necessity in these pages, "religious authority." This department of the study engages the abstract and logical involvements of the subject.

Chapters four and five might with propriety be considered subheadings of chapter three. In these chapters the motif of resolution is explicated. That the essence of truth and morality is universal is the proposal of chapter four, "The Intrinsicity of Morality." Chapter five recommends that truth, to be truth

indeed, must be communicated. This chapter bears the heading, "The Intrinsicity of Revelation." Important to this chapter is an exploration of the place of the Holy Scripture in the structure of religious authority.

Chapter six functions as a repository of proposed answers to questions incidental to the thesis, and is generally practical in scope. Summaries and conclusions will appear in this chapter.

Let it be noted that definitions will appear in the text of the study wherever appropriate and demanded.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PHENOMENON OF AUTHORITY

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### THE PHENOMENON OF AUTHORITY

The province of this chapter as previously indicated is to evince the structure of authority in which human life is inextricably bound up. If it can be indisputably demonstrated that physical existence is conditioned by physical laws, and that human society would collapse apart from immutable standards and values, we shall be in a better position to undertake that formidable task of giving meaning to the intangibles and etherealities of a religious authority.

By phenomenon and its cognates in this chapter is meant that which is empirical, or which has corporeity; that which is experimental by the physical senses, and which--in more technical expression--is the antithesis of noumenon. The genesis of the context of these terms is discovered in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, eighteenth century thinker, whose system is succinctly explained by Paul J. Glenn:

"Nature or essence of things is called Noumenon (plural, Noumena), and Noumena really underly Phenomena, but all we know is Phenomena, and not even Phenomena in essential existence, but only inasmuch as Phenomena somehow impel sense to function."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul J. Glenn, The History of Philosophy (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Company, 1945), p. 335. Emphasis markings are his. Glenn, Ph.D. and S.T.D., has served as Professor of Philosophy and the History of Philosophy in the College of St. Charles Borromeo, Columbus, Ohio.

Still prefatory to embarking upon the evidences of authority is the necessity of defining the key word of the present study, Authority. For the purposes of this monograph the better definition of authority is in a context of meaning, rather than in a formula of words which in the nature of the case would be more or less ambiguous and the denouement of which would be located in a system of thought and logical relevancy. So, if a formula must needs be disentangled from its etymological and semantic intricacies by situating it in the total connotation, then the formula provides only the benefit of reducing an explicit meaning to a code for the purpose of ease of recollection, and this with the ever present risk of equivocation and obscurity, and often of adulteration.

Therefore in prosecuting this task the present writer endeavors to demonstrate the tenets which inhere in the subject of authority. Besides this it may be recognized that authority has a popular meaning which, though requiring explication, is nonetheless suitable for a basis upon which to build.

The idea of certainty has very much to do with the concept of authority. Authority per se must be immutable, else its essence is destroyed. This postulate does not purport that delegated authority ("delegated" here used pre-critically) and authoritative agencies are eternal and unalterable, but rather that the principle, the intrinsicity, of authority--however temporal--is unchanging and ultimate.

## I. TYPES OF AUTHORITY

The pre-theoretical expression of delegated authority ushers into a discussion of the levels of authority. Though its essence is unitary, its executive functions are multifarious. This department of the investigation is treated acceptably by Bernard Ramm in The Pattern of Authority<sup>1</sup>, whose typology is included here.

Imperial authority is that power vested in persons, such as president or governor of any entity, or in agencies, such as judicial or military granches of a government, whose authority is resident because of superior rank confirmed by at least a majority of the responsible constituency thus governed.

"The family, the clan, the tribe, and the nation are possible only as a chain of imperial authorities is built amidst the web of social, political, and economic relationships. The practical necessity of imperial authority can scarcely be debated or challenged."<sup>2</sup>

Imperial authority improperly administered or seized by force, or conducted officiously, is no longer an authority but is instead authoritarian.

Delegated authority, kindred with imperial authority, prosecutes the judgment of the imperial figure. Delegated authority is

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Ramm, The Pattern of Authority (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 10ff. Dr. Ramm is Director of Graduate Studies in Religion at Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

vested in the chain of command as "the authority to act, to compel, to have access to, in virtue of right granted by imperial authority. The right of delegated authority is proved by its ability to show its origin from imperial authority."<sup>1</sup>

Delegated authority is enhanced or diminished in a manner not disproportionate to the performance of the imperial pattern of authority. The delegate is only as legitimate as the delegator.

Stipulative authority is that authority designated by constitutionality, and generally found in the social and business areas of our lives. Stipulation by an organization on how it will govern itself, such as by strict parliamentary procedure in its transactions, is the distinguishing feature of this type of authority.

Veracious authority assumes that a commonly recognized standard is truthful, and therefore authoritative. This type of authority refers to the credentials of an individual widely esteemed in his area of proficiency as being more authoritative than those of another obtruding his opinions. For instance, it is incontrovertible that the medical diagnosis of a consultatory staff of physicians at Mayo Clinic will be received as authoritative more than the medical diagnosis of the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, if such an unlikely situation can be imagined. The probity of either body in its own dominion is observed with the highest

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

reverence. The pre-eminence of one above the other is observable when the one opines within the jurisdiction of the other.

Veracity, or truth, is the essence of authority. To this proposition a detailed consideration will be given in another chapter. However, Dr. Ramm includes in his book a quotation from Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, the substance of which is foundational in approaching the subject of authority. "[Re: the laws of logic] They enforce obedience to them under the sanction that, if they are disregarded, thinking will be inept, unfruitful, nonsensical."<sup>1</sup>

Functional authority, or sometimes substitutional authority, denotes the material aids to learning and the facsimilies of original materials in lieu of the originals themselves, such as pictures of objects. Functional authority is observable in the teacher--learner relationship. "In the process of acquiring truth . . . the learner must accept the authority of the teacher until the learner can know the truth for himself."<sup>2</sup>

The authority of custom is the power to expect individuals to demean themselves in accord with behavior which has become socially acceptable by virtue of its traditional "rightness", or its antiquity. The severest penalty for non-conformity to social custom is public censure and repudiation by the society.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12, citing Iverach, "Authority", Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. II, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## II. CERTAINTY

Inquiry is appropriate at this point into the criteria of certainty, for here is the ground of authority. By what faculties do men apprehend the reliability of the things about them and thereby orient their lives? An idiomatic phrasing of the question would ask, how do individuals learn to "count on" matters to follow a customary pattern? Where there is no trustworthiness nor stability, there can be no authority.

But lest confusion arise at this point, it must be affirmed that introversive certainty and authority are not the same, that they are not synonymous. This is a specious but sophistic suggestion occasioned by misapprehension of the nature of authority, and an improper relationship between authority and force. Impersonal force, or the operation of natural law, links within inanimate creation, between human and inanimate existence, and between human and sub-human animality. In a very real sense, natural law also governs human relationships.

The authority of religion demands a higher and infinitely more personal, yet objective, ideal of authority. Such an higher dimension must necessarily be characterized by reciprocity, which can only be inter-personal, howbeit remaining objectively immutable.

The role of certainty in all of this is the preamble to both personal authority and impersonal force or natural law. These both must find a common issuance, an Ultimate Source, or else they are

mutually exclusive. It is thus as natural law functions and creatures perceive an orderly cosmology, whether by instinct or intuition, or by rational processes, that primordial chaos is avoided. The further distinction between the ground of certainty, which is extra-creaturely, and perception of certainty, which in man is both internal and external, is trenchant, yet, apart from this philosophical device, these can hardly be bifurcated. In these instances, the intended context is objective certainty. An investigation of the perception of certainty by irrational creatures would obviously be of no consequence to the present study.

Though all of this appear excursive, yet without certainty per se, there can be no authority; if no ground of certainty, no ground of authority--thus removing the objectivity of the universe--and if no perception of certainty then necessarily no awareness of an authority structure, and consequently no response to it. The distinction here is between ontology and epistemology. Recognition of at least some degree of certainty is prerequisite to a recognition of an authority structure, if initially that degree of certainty is only a solipsism.

Knowledge of certainty is intuitive, or a priori. These internal aspects of epistemology we reserve until a later chapter. It is to the external or psychological evidences of certainty that the remainder of the present chapter is drawn.

In his volume, Evidences of Christianity, Dr. Mark Hopkins has presented the evidential grounds of certainty in religion. The



present writer opines that his treatment may be wider than the strictly religious dimension.

"Either, then, there is certainty on other ground than mathematical evidence [which is in contradistinction to probable evidence], or there is no certainty concerning any fact or existing thing whatever, and there will be no stopping short of that absolute skepticism which denies the authority of the human faculties, and doubts of everything, and finally doubts whether it doubts."<sup>1</sup>

There are, according to Dr. Hopkins, six bases by which certainty is cognizable.<sup>2</sup>

First: Consciousness. By this faculty a man knows his own mind. He has certainty that he, at least, has mental awareness.

Second: Reason. This second ground assures a man of his own existence and conditions his knowledge of all around him, for he must believe in his own existence if he would believe in non ego. The faculty of perception by which this conviction of existence is born is commonly called reason or the reason.

"No man can believe anything with a greater certainty than that with which he believes in his own existence; and if we may suppose such a case, he who should doubt of his own existence, would, in that single doubt, necessarily involve the doubt of everything else."<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that Reason is First Truth, apart from which there is no reality, but rather to say that by the rational

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<sup>1</sup>Mark Hopkins, Evidences of Christianity (twenty second edition; New York: T. R. Martin and Son, 1904), p. 24. Dr. Hopkins is late president of Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 25f.

<sup>3</sup>Hopkins, op. cit., p. 25.

faculties one has first an awareness of his own existence, and from that moment of certainty is enabled to observe certainty in the non ego. This is fundamental to religious certainty and authority.

Third: the Senses. As susceptible as are the senses to deception, the evidence of the senses, before the "court" of the masses of people, is incontrovertible. The reliability of the testimony of the senses increases in direct ratio with the number of witnesses whose senses have corresponded. For instance, the univocal testimony of the sensation of an hundred or a thousand people can scarcely be contested. Here again, however, a caution must be made that the senses are not an indubitable ground of certainty in all instances.

Fourth: Memory. Confidence in the retentive faculties of the human mind is essential to the communication of testimony. Were it generally uncertain that memory is reliable, men would find it increasingly difficult if not utterly impossible to have social intercourse.

Fifth: Testimony. This ground of certainty is contiguous to both senses and memory. Testimony is not infallible, but as a ground of certainty its place is as secure as communication among men.

" . . . that testimony may be given by such men, and so many, and under such circumstances, as to form a ground of certainty as valid as any other can possibly be."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hopkins, op. cit., p. 26.

Sixth: Reasoning. The degree of certainty produced by ratiocinating circumstances and deducing a likelihood is not without the possibility of error. "When Robinson Crusoe saw the track of a man's foot upon the shore of his island," says Dr. Hopkins, "he was as certain there had been a man there as if he had seen him."<sup>1</sup>

The coalescence of sensations, when rationalized, indicate a probable conclusion.

The abstract of Hopkins' thesis is noteworthy.

"These, then, are the grounds of certainty, and each has its peculiar province. Of these, each of the first three--consciousness, reason, and the senses--is entirely competent within its own sphere, and, indeed, scarcely admits of collateral support. The evidence of memory, of testimony, and of reasoning, may mutually assist and confirm each other. It is upon the last two, the evidence of testimony and of reasoning, that we rely for the support of what are called the external proofs of Christianity; and if one of these is capable of producing certainty, much more if certainty admitted of degrees, would they both when conspiring together."<sup>2</sup>

### III. CATEGORIES OF NATURAL LAW

One further division of this chapter on the Phenomenon of Authority remains for elucidation, that of demonstrating by examples how human life would be incredible apart from its structure of authority. The formidableness of such an undertaking, in view of the expansiveness of this thing which is called "life", requires a systematic departmentalization.

Though not by such implying either endorsement or disavowal, and upon the strictly utilitarian motive of adopting for the purposes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

of this writing an expedient, the present writer has selected the law category titles of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven of Free University, and summarized by J. M. Spier in What Is Calvinistic Philosophy?<sup>1</sup> The considerations offered under each belong to the present study.

Number (mathematics): Fundamental and indivisible is the concept of "one". Otherwise, we might say "one-ness". The idea of "one", by whatever language it is expressed, is common. The world is made up of items, each having an intrinsic unity. There is one book; a series of six volumes is comprised of six "ones", which, taken together, comprise "one" set or series. It may safely be said that the idea of "one-ness" is the point from which all learning progresses.

It is hardly necessary to dwell upon the abstruse idea of existence without a "one" in it. It is impossible to even express such an idea consistent with itself, for communication demands units of speech.

We might logically conclude the present chapter at this point, since in the certainty of "one-ness", this certainty might progress by mathematical processes to prove the certainty of all things, for all phenomena is a combination of "ones". However, such an atomistic, mechanistic ontology terminates in its own discipline.

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<sup>1</sup>J. M. Spier, What Is Calvinistic Philosophy?, translated by Fred H. Klooster (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 45.

The principle of "one-ness", though, serves to illustrate the present writer's assumption, that law, and finally authority, rests upon certainty, and in the unit a certainty resides.

Space (geometry): The science of design would be jeopardized if it were unstable; indeed it could not be known as a science. There are multitudes of axioms in the space dimension.

The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. A square is a parallelogram with four 90 degree angles. There are 360 degrees in a circle. The value of pi is 3.141592653589793. A triangle is a figure bounded by three sides, at whose intersections are formed three angles, the sum of which is always 180 degrees. Only one straight line can be drawn through both of two given points. A straight line may be drawn to any desired length. No two objects may occupy the same space at the same time. A circle is always a figure enclosed by a curving line whose distance from the center is equal at all points.

Movement (physics): Anything occupying space has weight and material characteristics, and is chemically analyzable. Because of this substantial character, anything may move either by its own motive or by the influence of an external force. A body in motion tends to move at a continuous rate of speed unless acted upon by another force. A body in motion, moreover, will travel in a direct course and in a flat plane or trajectory unless influenced by a moderating force.

All objects are attracted toward the center of the earth, if they are within the earth's gravitational field. What has been designated the solar system of which our planet is a part is stabilized by the centrifugal and the centripetal laws of motion. Without either the whole system would collapse.

Much could be written, and indeed has been, to evince the absoluteness of physical law and the unqualified conditioning of human life upon its axiomatic character.

Life (biology): Organic existence depends upon laws. The law of growth is propositional. That living things reproduce, and that they reproduce their own kind are both unquestioned maxims. The fact that botanical organisms re-oxygenate the atmosphere is a natural law which would, if unreliable, prove ruinous to all life. Likewise if zoological organisms did not "burn" oxygen in their metabolic processes, the build-up of oxygen in the atmosphere would very soon surpass the level of safety. Again, if carbon dioxide were not discharged by the animal kingdom, the photosynthetic processes of the plant kingdom at large would cease. And let all ponder what tumult would ensue were the system of animal instincts suddenly to be negated or in any way diverted from its norm.

Sensation (psychology): Our considerations pass now into the animate realm of existence. Who will deny the reality of pain? With what degree of candor can anyone assert that excruciating pain can at any time deliver any other sensation than severe pain?

Instinctive behavior among animals is constant, as is the function of every sense within its dominion. The eye is never an instrument for hearing, nor are the auditory nerves prepared to interpret odor or taste. Sensation always functions harmoniously, but yet disjunctively, with no sensory nerve obtruding upon the sphere of another.

Thought (logic): Thought, or reason, as has been discussed previously in this chapter, is a first truth. To deny this is an admission of its truth, for such denial involves thought processes. If the faculty of reason exists, then must there also be a use of these faculties. Denial again disallows itself. Man is able to think analytically; that is, he not only thinks but knows that he thinks. To him alone out of all of created existence belongs reflective powers. That such assertions can be made is its own corroboration, and certainly the laws of logic are absolute.

Culture Molding (history): Culture is molded by man. Such an assertion can hardly be controverted, since history is the sum of past events, and particularly of the experiences of the human race.

Language (linguistics): Man has devised means of communicating himself, in gestures, intonations, and inscriptions. The fact that a reader attaches a value to the words on this page in common with the present writer demonstrates that there exist laws of transportation of ideas. In a basic and most primitive sense, communication

is possible transculturally, and, with the "time-machine" of comic strip fame, would be possible between men of widely separated eras. Such communication may readily be seen to be antecedent to inscribed symbolism.

Moreover, within given cultures and ages, common values attach to linguistic symbols. Upon the unimpeachable integrity of language the continuity of civilization depends. For instance, who can calculate the confusion if in the morning the language symbol for "door" should unexplainably mean "moon", and if while one half of the populace spoke of "street" as a right-of-way for vehicular traffic, to the other half the same word was associated with a mechanical time-piece, or again if a business man inquired of a store employee where he might purchase a "wallet", he should find himself directed to the bridal department where a "wallet" was a headpiece for a lovely young bride, and a "veil" was a small leather container for currency carried by a man. Imagine a sleek airliner whose captain instructs the second officer to lower the landing gear during the final approach to the field, but who responds by closing all throttles, simply because the laws of language were inconstant. Oversimplification? Obviously, but nonetheless illustrative.

Society is at once both guarantor and disciple of the laws of language.

Association (sociology): The laws of language presume a mutual association among people. "Association is something uniquely human," says Spier. "By this we mean to say that as humans we are



not simply next to each other in the world. Rather we have contact and fellowship with one another in numerous ways."<sup>1</sup>

We would say, then, that the fact that men in general desire fellowship, and in general are capable of social relationships, are established laws. Variations from this pattern are due, not to the changeableness of the laws involved, but to individual idiosyncrasies.

Economic Values (economics): The materiality of things has negotiable value. Intrinsic evaluations are metaphysical, and as such are not able to be misappropriated to the axiology of corporeity. However, man places an exchange valuation upon all things which are transferable. In the advancement of culture there comes concomitantly a monetary system, in which certificates or other guaranty warrants are issued in fixed amounts, and are exchangeable, value for value.

Another universal of economics is the requirement of moderation for well-being. Extravagance, on whatever level of society, and in any of its omnifarious manifestations is disruptive to the total community.

Harmony (aesthetics): A step above the exchange valuation of anything is its aesthetic value, or its value for beauty's sake. Beauty is in ratio to its degree of harmony with the totality of existence.

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<sup>1</sup>Spier, op. cit., p. 29.

Retribution (jurisprudence): There is within man a sense of right and wrong. Wrong, as offense against the law of harmony is demeanor which, universalized, would vitiate the total creation.

Whenever, therefore, a man, or a larger segment of the community, perverts that society by contumacious behaviour, the offended requires retributive action against the offender. The juridical processes, founded upon constitutional bases are further evidences of the law structure of the universe.

Love (ethics): Love is an universal language. It is irreconcilable that love and hate are homogeneous, or that either is equivocal, or dubious whether it will retain its distinctive nature. Interpersonal and trans-cultural negotiations in the spirit of love formulate the laws of ethics.

Faith (theology): The certainty of the necessity of faith is a major burden of this study. It is tacit here to say that such a universal law structure requires belief in a God who is entirely responsible.

We may say here, in anticipation of the remainder of the study, that the permeative concatenation in the universe argues for an origin and maintainence by a rational God. Spier concludes his explanation of the law spheres with a trenchant paragraph:

"And finally, the last or highest aspect of our human existence is the aspect of faith. For every person attempts by faith--be it a false or true faith, faith in the lie or faith in the truth--to find a firm foundation for his life

in a certainty that surpasses all earthly things."<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. SUMMARY

The summary of the chapter on the Phenomenon of Authority, then, is this: authority, as such, depends upon certainty, as such, but the two must not be confused. A certain thing is not always authoritative, but an authority must be structured by certainty. Having covered, in small detail, the latitude of natural law, the next undertaking shall be to see with what certainty man may believe in a Supreme Being as final authority.

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<sup>1</sup>Spier, op. cit., p. 20.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **THE STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY**

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### THE STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

This chapter takes up the issues involved in and the requirements of a philosophy of religious authority. The uninitiated may well ask, what is the problem in religious authority? Is it any more than a moot point to keep philosophers and theologians occupied with mental gymnastics?

In a book previously referred to, Bernard Ramm has in these words deduced the main issues in the question of religious authority.

"When one turns to the question of authority in religion the basic problem immediately arises: is there anything in religion which demands that a man think a certain way about religion and not another? Is there a man, a society, a principle, or a document which has the right to prescribe religious belief?"<sup>1</sup>

#### I. HUMAN RELIGIOUSNESS

##### Inherent Dangers in Authority.

Because the problem has implications involving the whole of the human family, the question of religious authority is profoundly more practical than merely an academic pursuit. By way of anticipation of a later topic, it may here be said that in any exercise

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Ramm, A Pattern of Authority (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 16.

of authority two dangers inhere, one is to destroy the content of authority by making it fluctuant to the occasion and principals involved; the other is to violate the integrity of authority by a misappropriation of trust. Ramm, speaking with caution to this point, says, "From another perspective the problem of religious authority is to steer a wise course between subjectivism and authoritarianism."<sup>1</sup>

### Centrality of Religion in Human Experience.

The reader will recall in the previous chapter the reference to the type of authority called substitutional authority. It is appropriate now in the present context to raise some safe-guards. That authority means different things to different persons at different times, and that the awakening and maturing of rationality may cause one to seek other sources of authority<sup>2</sup>, may be admissible within the limits of substitutional authority. However, inasmuch as religion is universally received as the cohesive inter-agent in the complexus of the weltanschauung (world view), and a faith is sought by all men to stabilize and to secure themselves from change in the face of a terrestrial order which appears to be constantly in transition, that which validates the individual's faith and makes it authority for his life, indeed that which is Truth, must be, and irrevocably, unchangeable. God, or Truth, or

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>"Authority", International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), I, 334.

the Upholder of man's faith is, accordingly, at least partially "Other-than" the mundane order. Man observes the process of the rise and course and obsolescence and final dissolution of all that is a part of his world, and concludes that he too must follow the same pattern. But, finding the conflict within himself of at once being inextricably bound to the natural order and yet presuming that by virtue of his rational character he should be above such a deterministic course and able to rationalize himself out of such a predicament, he casts about for some anchor which is transcendent to the warp and woof of his world, and invests there his hope and faith. Many, repeatedly frustrated in an interminable search for a metaphysical "Pillar", commit themselves fatalistically to the natural order and somehow assuage the inner man by a self-assumed immanent relationship to the world about them. So long as they are moving at the same pace as their world, all has the illusion of being stationary. While the mind refuses to grant complete confidence in this, nevertheless men are able to anesthetize by devious and often frantic machinations an awareness of their plight, and their hope is that when the end finally comes, it will come quickly. The picture is that of a man caught in the main stream of the Niagara River, rushing toward the cataclysmic Falls, who by his vision of the shore-line and the occasional rocks past which his sweep toward destruction carries him, knows unmistakably what the future holds, but who, by closing his eyes, does not see with what speed he is coming to the brink, and thereby alleviates

some of the pangs of his fear. As he finally catapults into space, he philosophizes, "Well, it was quite a ride", and thereupon is ushered into oblivion.

So is the universal quest for something worthy of faith. The law structure of the Universe, which is phenomenal, and which exercises an absolute control over man, so that he who would break natural law finds instead himself broken against it, argues very forcefully by itself for a metaphysical Ultimate. Philosophical theorizing adds a witness which is wholly superfluous to the evidence which natural law bears of its own immutability. Efforts to gainsay a metaphysical God confront a logical impasse. If whatever is non-demonstrable is ipso facto denied reality, and only that which is pragmatic is received as true and reliable, how logically can it be demonstrated that some non-demonstrable thing has no existence? How can anyone deliver a dictum that an Other World is devoid of reality until he has examined the reaches of the Other World to see if it be true? If it be argued that the Christian's eschatology is fantasy, how can such be declared until someone returns from the grave to declare it? Such an instance in itself could only attest to the omnipotence of One who is the Sustainer of the natural order. As a matter of fact, profane history is without vantage ground to certify that any other mortal was ever resurrected from physical death than those to whom the Holy Scriptures bear testimony. Moreover, those who deny the bodily resurrection of the historical Jesus Christ are disarmed when required to display documents certifying



reasonable doubt of the authenticity of the Scriptural record, and their arbitrary denial is an adulteration of their confessed philosophy that indubitable evidence and scientific demonstration equals belief.

### Scientific Method Finite.

One brief word further as to the supposedly indomitable scientific method. Science is at a loss to rationalize certain incongruities in the natural order, but yet it confesses its faith in the face of such evidence. For example, the speed of a light wave is approximately 186,000 miles per second. When that light wave strikes a pane of glass, the speed diminishes, but upon its exit from the glass, it immediately returns to a speed of 186,000 miles per second. A natural law says that energy can be neither created nor destroyed, and that the law of acceleration demands external motive for a change in speed. What unknown law then prompts the resumption of the stated speed of light once it has been reduced? The latter-day theory of relativity of Albert Einstein advances that light is unique among the elements of natural law in that it alone is independent of its source. Whether or not this hypothesis removes the conundrum, man will still be the obsequious devotee before the infinitude of the cosmic order. Such inexplicables do not decimate trust in the natural law. Rather they witness that uninfringed consistency on a naturalistic plane is, as far as can be observed, vacuous; and that two systems, one observable and the other invisible, do indeed correspond, the latter perpetuating the former, and the former evidencing the latter, with

the "other" system confessedly supreme because it transcends mortal rationality. To the contention that future decades of technological advances may resolve these conflicts, we say that confidence now in the scientific method in the face of "miracles" or phenomena which do not correspond with the regularity in the natural science camp is of the same character and essence as the faith of the religious supernaturalist. If each balances the other logically and rationally, then "my word" is as reliable as "your word".

### Co-authority in Religion Inconclusive.

However, this is no satisfactory denouement, for authority to be such must be ultimate. If every man's belief is authority for himself; that is, if authority is relative, then, logically, some tertium quid onlooking the human scene would see each man's authority indomitable. However, within the human scene itself, where these things would actually matter, each man would be perfectly persuaded that his authority was supreme, for this is the essence of ultimate authority. Such a projection would be total anarchy, and consequently self-destructive. Perhaps the nearest to this despairing condition is the confessed humanist who, when forced, must take the position that the only existence of which he can be sure is his own. He thereby commits logical and rational suicide. Man cannot survive if he attempts unequivocal belief only in his own existence, and yet denial of or serious agnosticism concerning a metaphysical Ultimate can only generate a solipsism. If there be agnosticism regarding a supernatural God Who is "Other-than"

mortal mind, then ultimacy must be vested in the highest order of the natural realm. And who is able to decide which one mortal is supreme, for authority must validate itself? The one proclaiming himself "King" would have to annihilate either the bodies or wills of all other men. Dead bodies cannot obey, and ability to govern robots is no real government. The only other alternative is naturalistic equality, which as we have shown destroys itself. Naturalism without supernaturalism cannot be held with integrity.

Excursus: The Intellect in Religion.

An aside is appropriate at this point lest the present writer seem to minimize the intellect. The utilitarian importance of the human mind is most anxiously accentuated. But we cannot hold that the mind is the highest order, nor that the human mind is essentially of an Eternal Mind, inasmuch as this would make man invincible and his world at all times perfect. The astute among us will confess that such an idealistic picture has not yet come into focus.

Summary and Transition.

Proving the logical necessity for a God has been the task of this chapter thus far. This approach has been intended as an accommodation to those whose intellectual discipline demands logical persuasion before devotional commitment. Assuasive and satisfying belief, however, is contingent upon personal acquaintance with the Seat of authority, an acquaintance which is not one-sided, but mutual, a reciprocal relationship of responsibility and loyalty. Logical necessity is not the vestibule of stalwartness and resolution.

Mere historicity is abstract and devoid of contemporaneousness.

Deductive reasoning lends substantively to an understanding of incorporate reality. Historicity adds the testimony of tradition and continuity, but only an immediate and mutual rapport with Him Who upholds all things in Truth, and in concert with all external evidences, convinces with finality the inward man that here indeed is Truth.

The quest of every man, whatever his talent and social level in the world society, and howsoever it may be phrased is, "How can I know God?" The problem of religious authority cannot with success be separated from epistemology. The rational constitution of man and his intrinsic worth demands an answer to this question. Let the question be held in abeyance temporarily.

## II. FAITH AND REASON

One's concept of religious authority must first have contemplated the perennial enigma of the relation of faith to reason. Many, for a reason which will shortly be mentioned, have bifurcated faith and reason, a move which proves disastrous to the integrity of one's theology. Faith, often, is the best rationale; albeit, without the rational faculties one could neither apprehend nor defend his faith. However, faith does not terminate in the capacities of the human mind.

"The body of Christian truth is addressed primarily to faith, and only secondarily to reason. As appealing to that universal principle of human nature, the faculty of believing, this body of truth is the Christian Faith. As related to

reason, it presents its credentials in order to acceptance on the part of those who seek the truth.

.....  
 The principle of faith belongs to human nature as certainly as does reason. Faith is the highest exercise of man as a personal being, and calls into action the full range of his powers--the understanding of the mind, the love of the heart and the volitional powers of the will. It is that power of personality, deep-seated in its spiritual constitution, by which it is able to accept truth presented to it on sufficient evidences, whether that evidence be consciousness, intuition or testimony."<sup>1</sup>

Those who irritate the tension between faith and reason by ignoring the supernatural aspect subject their belief to the vicissitudes which are wrought by the incongruities of a natural order divorced from its Creator. Contrariwise, those who deprecate reason find their abode on the periphery of thought, their disciples less than erudite, and their voice little heeded.

To this point in the study the present writer has contended for the necessity, upon the basis of deductive reasoning, of a metaphysical realism, transcendent, and yet coincident with the natural order. Thus it has been an undertaking which is wholly possible where two men communicate. Such encounters of the mind occur every day. The predominance belongs to him whose argument is more nearly accordant with knowledge and is more closely conforms with the principles of logic. In other words, these act as the referee.

The task of giving meaning to religious authority remains until the content of this spiritual reality is explored. However, here a difficulty presents itself which offends the natural bent of the human mind. If the spiritual realm is to be known, it must reveal

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<sup>1</sup>H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), I, 143, 144.

itself, and since it cannot be comprehended by deductive processes, it must certify itself and create faith. There is no tertium guid to serve as referee here, and however men may argue religion and religious authority, so long as it remains purely speculative, it rises no higher than the words of co-equals; that is, "my word against your word". A new tack is requisite from this point.

### Mode of Apologetic.

The present writer is convinced that the best apologetic is not made by "fielding" an antagonists challenges and hurling back answers, for too frequently the replication is in the same spirit as the criticism. Method for method encounter by controversialists, which tends to terminate in speculative adventures, may be obviated by a precise apologetic.

The witness of experience must be reckoned with. This is not "feeling"; this is certainty that comes by living an experience which deduction per se is incapable of certifying. To those who would disclaim such as a manifestation of obscurantism, we would reply that unless one is himself an obscurantist he will observe that there is logical realism and there is pragmatic realism. Life is infinitely larger than can be comprehended by the laws of logic.

In addition, the evaluation of a theological position can be accurately determined only after its reactionary content is separated from its evidences. Much theological controversy within evangelical circles is reactionary. Likewise, persons outside the Christian faith are not convinced because of a moral predicament which darkens the mind, creating all manner of diversion to avoid

illumination. These diversions have very often taken the form of a new theology which minimizes the predicament and emphasizes human sufficiency and scientific realism. "Where Christ presides, idle speculation is hushed; His doctrine is learned in the doing of His will, and all knowledge ripens into a deeper and richer experience of His truth and love."<sup>1</sup>

The persuasive element in faith is not intellectual conviction, but rather devotional confidence which must rely heavily upon personal experience and inward certitude. "There is a difference between holding a theory and being held by a conviction."<sup>2</sup> Speculation permits man to perceive no more of reality than the capacity and discipline of his intellect. A religion of human construction becomes merely another element in the midst of human capriciousness and perfidy, itself a representation of dereliction from God's fellowship. "Jesus Christ is either the corner stone or the stone of stumbling."<sup>3</sup>

That man has a predilection to religiousness, the finding of ultimate authority for his life, can scarcely be disputed. Whether the ground of a man's religion is natural or revealed (for

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<sup>1</sup>Declaration of faith issued by the Richmond Conference of Friends in 1887. Constitution and Discipline (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Yearly Meeting of Friends Church, adopted June, 1945), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Quotation from an address by Professor Paul Mills of George Fox College, Newberg, Oregon, delivered before the faculty and students of Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, February 6, 1959.

<sup>3</sup>Quotation by Dr. Mildred Wynkoop in a seminar session at Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, on February 10, 1959.

this is the most general division among religious systems) is largely determined by what Ramm refers to as the "irreducible psychological element in the recognition or acceptance of authority."<sup>1</sup> The apparent infrequency of overt malignancies, having a supposed Divine origin, visited upon mankind tends to confirm the individual in his vanity, figuring that the diminutive odds against an uninterrupted indulgence are chance-worthy. Individuals idealize that which is acquiescent to their prevailing spirits, and conform to however their subjective minds are disposed toward a specified religious authority. This element is inescapable, and avowal or execration of a proposed religious authority is due not so much to the integrity of the authority as to the subjective disposition. This statement is made, not to depreciate integrity as a criterion of authority, but rather as an accommodation to the emphasis that man cannot be coerced into discipleship. There resides here an imponderable which may not be resolved without anticipating later sections of this study.

Excursus: Human Predisposition.

Man's predicament, which predisposes his mind, is his conflict with God over the rights to his own person. It is a moral predicament, essentially in the inner man, and implacable except by the self-consuming convincement that in devotion to God is integrity and wholeness of life, not to be found in any intellectual resolution. It works, it satisfies, and it is rationally defensible.

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 13.



Martineau holds religious authority to be essentially internal and self-evident.

"And this response it is which makes the moral intuitions, started by outward appeal, reflected back by inward veneration, more than egoistic phenomena, and turning them into correspondency between the universal and the individual mind, invests them with true 'authority'. We trust in them, not with any rationalist arrogance because they are our own, but precisely because they are not our own, with awe and aspiration. The consciousness of authority is doubtless human; but conditional on the source being divine."<sup>1</sup>

### III. CRITERIA OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

As in the previous chapter the criteria of certainty were adduced, so also there are presumptive criteria of religious authority.

The need of authority is universal. Man needs stability; he presumes stability in his total life experience.

An infallible criterion of truth is constitutional in authority; that is, it may not be self-contradictory.

"For the ultimate must bear witness of its own ultimacy, the absolute of its own absoluteness, and the authority of its own sovereignty.

. . . . .  
No process of mediate reasoning can establish it, for no premise can be found from which it issues as a conclusion. It judges all things, but is judged of none. It is its own witness and judge. All that reason can say about it is the dictum of Parmenides: 'it is'.<sup>2</sup>

Declarative or humanly conceptualized and constituted authority

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<sup>1</sup>James Martineau, The Seat of Authority in Religion (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1890), p. VII (preface). Emphasis markings are his.

<sup>2</sup>I.S.B.E., I, 334.

in religion is peremptorily and intrinsically no authority.

Religious authority is antecedent to all existence, and accordingly precedes human rationality. It is therefore the consummation of fallacy to presume that the intellect is competent to validate religious authority.

Religious authority must have ultimate certainty. If the Cause of all cosmic reality is immutable, so also is the structure of reality. The converse is evident.

Religious authority must authenticate itself. This is a first truth which cannot be disparaged, even as the present writer has stipulated continually, both by implication and explication throughout these pages.

Religious authority must commend rather than compel obedience. This criterion implicates the dual certification necessary to any authority. First, it must certify to the inner man that "this is right", and second, there must be objective witness; that is, there must be an authority structure.

Observe tyrannical government, that it presents an authoritative front and enforces itself with arms and troops, and secures obedience because the governed are not masters of their own wills, but it does not commend itself to the conscience of the people as being "right".

On the other hand if there were lacking a witness to universal "rightness" and all were left to immediate perception by individuals, such subjectivity would result in anarchy.

This brings us to an enumeration of observable standards of religious authority.

The derivatives of religious authority must not offend rapport. This principle protects society from self-annihilation. As often as one reads that someone has behaved atrociously, purportedly under religious unction, this criterion of authority asks whether such conduct could conceivably be universalized and still commend itself to man as "right", leaving him in full possession of his volitional powers.

Additionally, this principle of religious authority serves as a demonstrable witness to authority. For instance, when the apostolic office of the Apostle Paul was challenged by certain of the Corinthian brethren, Paul replied that by deprecating his apostleship, they were concomitantly negating the faith that he had wrought in themselves by his appearing and original acceptance by them as an Apostle.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, this principle of religious authority observes the intrinsic worth of the individual, by which is meant that man is worth preserving, and that religious authority is bent toward this goal of preserving man for fellowship with his Creator. Basic knowledge of right and wrong is innate. It is "right" to feed and clothe the destitute; it is wrong to rise up against one's neighbor capriciously. Religious authority promotes the well-being of all men,

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<sup>1</sup>I Corinthians 3:4ff.

seeking to conserve them for their Creator. Thus it commends itself; thus it certifies its "rightness". Were it to require violence to intuitive ethical conduct, it would be universally repudiated.

"There can be no surer characteristic of a divine dispensation than that it lifts its disciples to a position higher than the level from which it originally spoke, and so widens their horizon as to dwarf the little circle which then fenced them round."<sup>1</sup>

Religious authority must be reciprocal. Authority has no way to commend itself apart from its effects upon personal existence. Religious authority must have the character of reciprocity, the interplay between Truth and the reception of Truth, and conformity to it. If one makes voluntary conformation to Truth, it becomes authoritative for him. This is a moral choice. If one rejects Truth, this is a moral choice, albeit a negative confession of Truth, by which reason we may say that the essential nature of Truth is not decimated. Truth does not depend upon the corroboration of man, as we have previously shown.

Religious authority must be seen in the light of its source. Attestation has already been given to the necessity of determining whether a religious authority is revealed, or whether it is conceptualized by rational processes.

Religious authority must cohere; that is, religious authority lies in its integrity. If it be heterogeneous, it can be no authority.

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<sup>1</sup>Martineau, op. cit., p. 300.

## IV. PROSPECTUS

This brings us up to the point of introduction of the next two chapters. These criteria of religious authority are impossible of achievement except as a personal morality, or voluntary discipline according to Truth, is the cohesive agent. The principle of this discipline is constant, whether a man were the sole rational product of the Creator, or whether he were one of two such creatures, or a part of a multiplex social structure.

These criteria, furthermore, must surmount the epistemological problem. The knowledge of Truth and the desirable response to Truth must be revelatory. The Truth is Authority, and Divine revelation makes it known.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INTRINSICALITY OF MORALITY IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

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The time has come to declare the premise or thesis of this study. In its initial form the dictum may appear compendious, but may the reader bear patiently, recognizing that the subject of this chapter probes a dimension in which articulation is arduous. Definitions, too, may seem to lack amplitude, but let judgments depend upon the total context.

#### I. THE PREMISE

##### God is Ultimate Authority.

The One of whom this postulate speaks is the God of the Christian Faith. By Ultimate Authority is meant the First Cause of cosmic law and the Conditioning Influence upon legitimately constituted institutional authority.

The moralism which humanity argues is whether a given thing is right or wrong. The issue at point rather is whether it is Christian or unchristian. The intellectualism of the scientific method can observe phenomena and intone that whatever follows the experimental pattern is right, but it must not commit itself to say that whatever is "miracle" is wrong, for tomorrow's discovery may remove the label of "miracle". Thus the intellect is only declarative,

while religion is interpretive; science says "what", theology says "why". The burden upon religion is obvious. It must provide cement and coherence for the structure of the Universe. This, the writer professes, is the prestige and genius of Christianity, for it acknowledges the Sovereign and Eternal God.

## II. DEFINITIONS

Distinction and working definitions must be given to terms which will appear with frequency in these pages.

Moral is a renascent vocable which is selected, not because it has any intrinsic worth, but because it bears acquaintance and has produced generally a figment of meaning in the minds of men; that is, it is not a technical nor singularly theological term. Within the context of "moral", Edward John Carnell of Fuller Theological Seminary, an eminent apologist for evangelical theology on the contemporary scene, construes the "veto rights over his own impulses" which man enjoys.<sup>1</sup> But finer delineations shall yet be drawn.

Ethic is widely, and pre-theoretically, used as a synonym of morality. Immanuel Kant made religion only an appendage of ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Moral, per se, lays before man two alternatives--moral disposition or non-moral disposition. Translated into demeanor in the human society it may be equivocally termed morality or ethics.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward J. Carnell, Christian Commitment (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Third printing: Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), II, 92.



Morality is the total man in response to God, either rapprochement or contumacy.

### III. MORAL CONSCIENCE UNIVERSAL IN PERSONALITY

The sense of moral constitution is shared by all men. This corpus of conviction, however consciously repressed, is observable as man integrates himself with the physical world outside himself, and again as often as he searches within himself. However decadent a commonwealth may become, there yet remains the vestige of a public conscience which may be offended and appalled. Wiley opines:

"This moral world is as orderly and full of purpose, as the physical, and can be explained only by a cause of the same nature as itself. The central fact of the moral realm is conscience; but conscience does not make moral law. The moral law is independent of man and unvarying from age to age. Its laws are inexorable and its existence not only demands an Author, but the moral realm reveals His character as the friends of righteousness and the enemy of unrighteousness."<sup>1</sup>

The formulas of legislatures to protect the public conscience is necessarily subsequent to the moral conscience; that is, the law of the land reflects the moral constitution of individuals who both give assent to the impingements of society and also discover that something which appeals to the private conscience as being "right" is shared by the community. That the public does express itself in favor of right and as the enemy of offenders, and secures uniformity in moral conduct by the imprinting of statute books is evidence that moral sensitivities have their roots in an Ultimate and

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<sup>1</sup>H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), I, 239.

a metaphysical morality. Not only in contemporary time is there uniform morality, but this essential morality transcends temporariness. The unprovoked attack upon the life of another person has been wrong in all eras. Of course what constitutes legitimate provocation has been modified, not to say refined, the latter of course being a subjective opinion. In this same light, if change in legal formulations is considered against the backdrop of history and tradition alone, man is without the wisdom to objectivize his "new" standard. It may be either progress or regress, and in the subjective opinions of the several, it may be both. Disunity ensues. Only in the concept of moral absoluteness can the human family avoid the ensnarement of its own devices and passions, and equivocations.

The writer is persuaded that the antecedent to the public conscience is the individual sense of rightness. This phenomenon can be attributed only to a supreme, rational Being. Carnell has designated this personal moral awareness as moral self-acceptance.

"A balanced world view is made up of three basic ingredients: the facts of experience, the requirements of logical consistency, and the witness of the moral sense. These ingredients correspond to man's fourfold environment: the physical, the rational, the aesthetic, and the moral and spiritual. I feel there are good reasons to believe that only moral self-acceptance unites these elements without falsifying the witness of one in an effort to give an intelligent account of another. Practically every error in the history of thought can be traced back to a faulty emphasis on the facts of experience, the requirements of logical consistency, or the witness of the moral sense."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carnell, op. cit., p. 71.

By whatever name it may be called, or however it may be rationalized, the sense of being responsible to the "right" extends to every individual. "It is because there is a Supreme Person that we recognize a supreme good, a supreme duty, a moral law."<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. GOD IS TRUTH

Ultimate Truth, which in the obliquity of human judgment seems ensconced behind a metaphysical curtain of secrecy, is of such a nature that cognizance of the Truth and consent to the Truth are in juxtaposition. Men, who are ever searching for Truth, have little hope or desire of finding it, for the inexorable consequence must be commitment to it, either in conforming their lives to it or in giving negative assent by repudiation of it. Little erudition is needed to infiltrate this scheme and expose the constitutional prejudice of man against the Truth.

Universal Truth must be universally knowable and universally known. This is a truism. Sober judgment acknowledges that such a portentous office can be the province alone of Almighty God. He Who is Truth provides Himself perpetually with a witness to Himself. The conundrum of the human situation is that while man feigns an offensive toward Truth, he is dissembling, for having a Witness to the Truth within himself, his disposition is to deviously attempt to elude the conviction of the Truth. That God is Truth becomes the personal knowledge of every person.

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<sup>1</sup>Wiley, op. cit., p. 240.

## V. GOD IS MORAL

That God is Truth and the Truth of God are not to be confused. The monotheist, the polytheist, and the henotheist, (atheism cannot be consistently held), all are driven to their worship by the witness that God is Truth. The Truth of God, that is, the Truth about God, is a subsequent perception of knowledge. Only as this distinction is made can the restlessness of man's soul hope to be quieted. This careful discrimination lifts men's hearts above inert gods and speculative deities to pure faith in Almighty God, the Creator of all things, the One omnipotent and omniscient.

The Truth of God is His essential morality. This can hardly be determined by deductive sciences. First, and foremost, the symphonic witness of men who have dared to commit themselves to the principle that Christianity is a way of life and not an adjunct to it, that whether it be called moral or by some other linguistic symbol, nevertheless that God has completely satisfied the soul and unified the life and that they find themselves utterly at peace in God's creation, falls with that same harmonious resonance as, for instance, do the dulcet themes of the larghetto movement of the Beethoven Second Symphony. The beauty of the latter is not to be enjoyed by the possession of a complete score, but in the performance of devoted musicians under a skilled director. So also the univocal personal testimony of Christianity to the morality of God is incontrovertible.

Secondly, God is moral precisely because He is God. The words of the writer's professor, Dr. Mildred Wynkoop, are germane:

Although 'moral' is not a Biblical word it is a term which well expresses the central concern of the whole of Scripture.

.....  
 "The word moral has been chosen because it expresses, popularly, an existential dimension. . . . Moral is a word which helps to emphasize the unitary principle of personality."<sup>1</sup>

Whether the term be "moral" or "larom" matters not, except as the former is already set in a climate of popular understanding. God IS moral. To say that God willed morality would be to suggest equal alternatives--morality and immorality--a move which would make immorality or evil co-existent with God. God thus would not be God but rather a demiurge. The Supreme Being, Almighty God, is unified in Himself. He cannot be both moral and immoral. His Creation and Providence can only be homogeneous in their fashioning. Immorality, elements of disunity, is the alternate response of rational beings.

Thirdly, and in the light of the preceding, superflously, there is at least a fifty-fifty chance that God is moral. It makes greater sense to believe that He is moral than that He is immoral (in popular context of meaning).

Fourthly, with respect to the rational evidences for God's essential morality, and until any antagonist to this postulate makes a scientific examination of God, any grounds for controversy are tenuous.

## VI. GOD IS A PERSON

This assumption is not evidential, apart from inward

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<sup>1</sup>Mildred B. Wynkoop, "An Existential Interpretation of the Doctrine of Holiness" (Portland, Oregon: Western Evangelical Seminary, 1958), p. 54. (Mimeographed). Dr. Wynkoop is Professor of Theology, Western Evangelical Seminary.

certification. "No man hath seen God at any time."<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as man is personal, it seems indisputable that man's God, his Creator, could not be other than a person. It may be adduced further from the principles of arguments three and four above that God has personality, though it is worthy of reiteration that God can never be the object of inductive or deductive resolutions. To the intellectually impious He is ever the Subject. The unpretentious and self-abnegating person "finds" and becomes known by God.

## VII. GOD IS PERSONAL

The genius of personality is the capacity for philosophical communication. God, omnipotent and personal, communicates Himself to created, rational beings (by methods which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter), who, because of God's essential morality, are endowed in His moral image and have all the capacities pertaining to personality. There is therefore an elementary potential of reciprocation between God and man.

God must communicate with man, else He could have no communication. Not so with man. Having "discovered" other beings like himself, man may form a closed society, insulating his volitional faculties from God, the anomaly resulting from the fact that, while God cast man in His moral image, an integral part of morality is sovereignty. Thus man may say "yes" or "no" to anything outside himself which is optional.

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<sup>1</sup>I John 4:12

The need for perspicuity at this point involves an understanding of the role of personableness in personality. Every personality has some degree of personableness about himself; that is, a magnetism which attracts, admittedly some much more than others. Personableness originates in love. The most captious individual must love and be loved, otherwise he would have no touch-stone for communication. Men love because they must love, not because of fear of the consequences of not loving. But man recognizes that hate has invaded his society, a principle which is utterly irreconcilable with love. Hate bifurcates unity.

What breach of unity man, by his own recognizance, marks in human society, he cannot sincerely conceptualize in God because (1) it is intuitively wrong, that is, it does not make sense, and (2) its logical consequences are a solipsism. The essence of morality, which is love, man conceptualizes as perfect in a perfect God. God is personable, in Whom there is not the slightest deviation. While personality must love, sovereignty accords it the privilege of choosing the object of its love and attractive influences. For God's part, His communication is toward the image of Himself, man. Man, for his part, spurns this great love and deviates his affections to creatures like himself. If this were not true there would be no need for a study of religious authority.

All of this is but a rationale, a human attempt to give meaning to that which finds its Ultimacy in Almighty God. The denouement is that while there is the potential of mutual love, it is not universally realized because of the predicament of

disunity in which man finds himself, a dilemma of his own craftiness. However verbose he may be, he cannot finally persuade his own self against the communication of the personal God to his soul. The deviation of his own character from so perfect a love, the beauty of which is its perpetuity and inexhaustibleness--for he experiences it--and its unwavering fidelity requited by his scorn, contrasted to the fickleness of his own affections toward a profusion of devotional objects, are a continual indictment of his mind. And this indictment strengthens conviction, either to the decision to love God, or to persistent contempt of His love.

#### VIII. THE PERSONAL IS RESPONSIBLE

Allusion has been made already to the coincidence of responsibility in personality. Howbeit there is cause for elaboration upon this precept. Personality is a unity in a unitary system. Each personality is a sovereign dominion with all of the rights and privileges pertaining thereto, with morality its essence--or that by which it is what it is. The systematization or coherence of the multiplicity of personalities is the moral image of God Who is the Fount of all existence and in Whom all things are comprehended. In this moral image and design, personalities interpenetrate their frontiers and exercise moral suasion. In the vast complexity of relationships occasioned by the co-mingling of personalities there is mutual responsibility. This mutuality of dominion and respect in moral suspension is the "'I' and 'Thou'" concept of Martin Buber.

From the work of Dr. Wynkoop cited previously the writer



offers these salient sentences in illumination of this tenet.

"Moreover, to be personal, is to be responsible by created necessity. Men have wills, and the will is an integral part of personality. And the will is rational not simply a mood, instinct or passing desire.

"The one thing which distinguishes man as a man is his capacity to make decisions which are good or bad, right or wrong, on the basis of principle, irrespective of desirable or undesirable consequences to himself. . . . Rather than to say, men have wills, it might be more true to say, to be human is to will responsibly.

.....  
 "Not only are men personal and responsible but also they are aware of themselves as facing the tension of ethical situations. . . . Not only do we say, 'I can choose', or, 'I must choose', but, 'In this choice I am violating or approving the right'.<sup>1</sup>

It is not an issue of responsible decisions or irresponsible decisions. Man is responsible, whether those decisions conform to the right, or whether they offend moral integrity.

Superceding the need of man for moral relationships to stabilize his life, we are faced incontrovertibly with the fact that man presumes moral intercourse. From the most distant and casual of relationships to the most intimate, man presumes the integrity of his society. The idea of trust or faith might properly be inferred here, which faith in morality, which is in the image of God, is declarative--though often not verbally nor dispositionally--that God is Truth and Authority.

Whenever a man begins to doubt the integrity of his communicants, or violates his own conscience, his communication becomes progressively rapacious and his personality eviscerated. What is

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<sup>1</sup>Wynkoop, op. cit., pp. 60. 61. Emphasis markings are hers.

true in human interpersonal relationships is true in the Creator-creature, or God-man relationships. This ushers into the next division of our thought.

#### IX. THE MORAL PREDICAMENT

Frequently in these pages the author has made reference to the moral predicament. It is this.

The morality or integrity of God may be counted upon; He stabilizes the universe. However, not so man. The image of morality in the human creature has suffered a catastrophe. Theologians refer to it as the Fall of man. How it happened is not germane here. Important, though, is the observation that the nascent difficulty was occasioned by human infidelity against God, a move sanctioned by human sovereignty; that is, it was a responsible choice. The fact that although man retains his sovereignty of personality, he does not always choose the right, is evidential. Man makes portentous overtures toward peace, but his predilection to war can not be disguised. An effacement of the unitary principle of personality has occurred. Whereas love is obviously the cement which is able to unite man with man and man with God, the incident of and disposition to hatred and immorality is proliferate. Incursions upon decency and public conscience stagger sensibilities.

The conundrum or predicament is thrown in relief when man emulates the confusion of the man alone in a wilderness--the rest of the world is lost. Actually he has lost himself. By deviating from fellowship with God man begins to lose touch with reality. It

is morality which gives meaning to phenomena, to all of reality. Man has arbitrarily severed communication with God by an offense against the moral image within himself, an error of believing that he can be independent of any other personality, compounded, or perhaps initiated, by thinking that he can be independent of his Creator, the One apart from Whose image he would not be a person. The perfectly good word for this moral predicament is "sin". Sin is the prostitution of one's responsibility to every person, including his own, and especially to God. The sin of unbelief in God precipitates invariably violation of other personalities. What might seem to some to be only innocuous contempt of others originates in a climate of unrelatedness to the moral image of God.

In seeking health of mind and peace of soul man has perpetuated his predicament by persistence in a course whose principle is a rebuff of the moral constitution of personality and of the final authority of God. It is well to remark that a predicament is indicative of a crisis which the involved ones are powerless, or nearly so, to amend. The intransigence of the human dilemma by means which do not require of man moral integrity or, as someone has said, being straight in a crooked world, is certain. Lest there yet persist any misconception, we aver that moral integrity is impossible except the individual commit his life to the authority of God.

The consequences of immorality are both immediate and forensic; immediate in that non-moral choices work their own censure and begin working their own punishment; forensic in that God's

disapprobation is sensed by the conscience and a feeling of guilt ensues, and also in that the punishment of intuitive guilt shall be finalized by the federal pronouncement of God, except a man wills to do God's will.

#### X. MORALITY INTRINSIC IN CRITERIA OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

God is final authority, for morality alone can avail to secure the self-evident criteria of religious authority in a system. Indeed we may assuredly say that any one criterion cannot be realized by naturalistic processes, nor by impersonal metaphysical or spiritistic systems.

As the premise of the present chapter is resolved--namely, that Almighty God is ultimate Authority--we again enumerate the eight categories of criteria which were introduced in the preceding chapter, to demonstrate that Morality, which is the essence of God, can indeed support these norms.

It is ultimate Truth. Our apologetic here is pursuant to the argument that God is Sovereign of the Universe and necessarily of moral constitution. The ultimacy of Morality must follow. It may be said with appropriateness that the ultimacy or essence of human personality is the moral nature. Man's integral correlation with all of personal existence must be predicated before rapport can occur.

It has ultimate certainty. Rapport is possible only in a climate of certainty. Morality is able to certify religious

authority inasmuch as it is the essence of God and the constitution of man created in the image of God. Wherever there are no essential antitheses between personalities, there is at least the potential of communication and religious relationship. The certitude of morality is in the person of the Almighty God. The inner man witnesses with certainty of discernment between right and wrong. Albeit the individual does not always choose the right, nevertheless the clarity of the moral situation is always unmistakable.

It authenticates itself. Morality is its own guarantor, else it could not be of God, for God is the Supreme Being and Author of all things.

It commends rather than compels obedience. Compulsion is the progeny of disunity. It presumes an arbiter or over-lord enforcing an obedience that is devoid of harmony. Personality is subdued by compulsion.

Religious authority is not a suppressionism. A religious authority must appeal to man's sensitivity to rightness. Morality is that unitary principle of personality which obviates basic fractionating of the right. Personality wills to do the right because it is the right and not out of fear of possible recriminations.

To some commendation may seem only another degree of compulsion. These may contend for a more liberal expressionism, failing to discern that in freedom popularly so-called men are motivated by a devisive disposition, and not an unitive one.

"If one must obey an imposed moral code, it is said, the very structure of integrity is violated. That is, if one surrenders his own active judgment to that of another he is no longer a moral man but a puppet. . . . The fallacy, as we see it, in this criticism of Christian morality is in supposing that law to which one is to surrender is impersonal and arbitrary. The word surrender is used advisedly, for it is precisely in the idea of passive, a moral renunciation of personal responsibility that the error lies."<sup>1</sup>

So morality, because it is intrinsic in personality, brings man to full responsibility and acknowledged liability to the right.

Its derivatives do not offend rapport. The purpose of religion is universal faith. Accordingly, its appeal to personalities must not be discordant to public conscience. Morality challenges the individual to peaceful relationship with all of personality, including God. Because morality harmonizes all things, it never sanctions judgment which is disruptive. It does not depend upon human ignorance, but it champions intelligence and wisdom to individual capacity. Non-moral influences are invariably selfish, a state of disposition which, by reason of the sovereignty of personality, threatens to make every other person a persona non grata.

It is reciprocal. That is, not only is the Moral Truth, but the truth of morality is that a person must have optional choice. Man may govern before what he will humble his affections and confess allegiance. He may choose what authority he will actively ratify, whether it be God or whether, as is the only other possibility, it

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<sup>1</sup>Wynkoop, op. cit., 64, 65.

be kaleidoscopic. Relativity is avoided, and reciprocity maintained by recalling that the essence of morality is eternal Truth and as such unchangeable. Consequently, morality is personally authoritative whenever a man commits himself to living integrally with all persons and the Lord God. The fact, however, that any number of individuals do not dispositionally acknowledge the authority of morality does not transmute ultimate Authority.

Its source is ultimate. To express it in this way is an accommodation to utility. Morality is the essential source of all personality. As such it is not the conceptualization of human minds. God is known because He has chosen to reveal Himself to man. Inasmuch as this is the material of chapter five, we shall not dwell longer upon it here.

It coheres. Morality cannot contradict itself for it is itself the nexus of all of reality. It is the cement which gives meaning to phenomena. Religion, adjunctive to life in natural or spiritistic systems, is the total expression of the moral life. Its coherence is in the unitary principle of personality, whose objective is the saving of all men from the proclivity toward self-destruction of non-morality, and the preserving of them for eternal fellowship with their Creator.

## XI. SUMMARY

The premise, "God is ultimate Authority", has been defended from the standpoint of the moral essence of God and the moral image

of God in human personality. God is Authority precisely because He is God. The exercise of religious authority does not intend to suppress personality, but to confront it with a standard which when observed unites men in friendship with God, and which when infringed separates from the consciousness of divine approbation and precipitates cavilling and incompatibility and stridence in human relations.

Morality is authority because (1) morality is the common denominator between the Creator and his creatures, (2) moral integrity in its identity with God is able to give the "why" of all of reality, sustaining all things in consonancy, (3) morality preserves the public conscience invincible, indeed is the universal consciousness of right and wrong, and (4) simply, it "works".



## CHAPTER V

### THE INTRINSICALITY OF REVELATION IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

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### THE INTRINSICALITY OF REVELATION IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

Someone may say that up to this point all sounds plausible enough, but how do we become aware of Truth and the standards of moral integrity? The theologian may object to the emphasis upon the subjective perception and judgment of a man who, according to chapter four, is caught in the vise of a moral predicament. The Christian philosopher goes a step farther and inquires whether we have not thus far been heavy on the transcendentalism of God, with little said about the epistemological problems. These are trenchant observations, demanding resolution if our philosophy of religious authority is to be substantiated. Edwin Lewis in A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation has noted, "It ought to be self-evident that if what is believed is not so, then the experience arising from the belief has no ultimate validity."<sup>1</sup> Such is the quest of the present chapter. How do we know that morality is intrinsic in religious authority? Truth must be known.

There can be no moral integrity, no personality, unless

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lewis, A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation (second edition. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1940), p. 118. Emphasis markings are his. Lewis is Professor of Systematic Theology and the Philosophy of Religion in Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, New Jersey.

communication is possible. God must be able to know what man is thinking. Man must be able to know what God thinks. The former is not a conspicuous problem. It is admissible that the Sovereign of the Universe knows, or at least may know if He desires, what is contemplated by men. The latter maxim is more ponderous, however. Is a certain knowledge of the Truth of God cognizable? (Lewis does not distinguish between certainty and knowledge. "Knowledge and certainty are obviously inseparable. When we say, 'I know', we are also saying 'I am certain'."<sup>1</sup>) Christian theology affirms that God has revealed Himself to mankind. It is revelation which exculpates religious authority from the principle deficiency of the intellectual argument--a God of logical necessity. Through revelation, God becomes personal. Again the question is not whether revelation is possible. God assuredly is not hindered, either by anything within Himself, nor by any inadequacy of His creative enterprise, from making Himself known to man. To be explored are the "what", the "why", and the "by what means" of divine revelation.

## I. DIVINE REVELATION

Divine revelation is the Self-initiated disclosure by God of Himself for the recovery of man from his moral predicament and restoration to integrity of personality. In the definition we have at once stated both the "what" and the "why" of divine revelation. To be authoritative, religion must have both a moral base

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

for its rationale and moral content in its substance. These coalesce in revelation. Revelation appeals to the rational mind, that is, it involves a moral choice. Failure to discriminate here is liable to incur severe malfeasance of Christian practice, purportedly under Divine unction. The publicity which accompanies such conduct startles the public and intensifies the common misunderstanding of revelation. In the minds of many revelation is the whimsical incursion of an inconsistent God, while to others revelation signifies a suspension of cosmic sensation, almost a comatose mind. It is imperative that revelation be seen as the normal occupation of God, executed teleologically. (Note appended definitions in footnotes).

## II. THE TELEOLOGY OF REVELATION

As we have previously adduced, the irreducible requirement of personality is fellowship. This involves the intermingling of

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"By revelation, in the broader sense of the term, is meant every manifestation of God to the consciousness of man, whether through nature and the course of human history, or through the higher disclosures of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Scriptures. It thus becomes at once 'the most elementary and the most comprehensive word of our theological system'."

H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), I, 125f.

"In Christianity the authority-principle is the Triune God in self-revelation.

1. This principle frees from subjectivism.
2. This principle frees from authoritarianism.
3. This principle avoids the problems of an exclusive written authority.
4. This principle avoid the finite's setting in the place of the infinite.
5. This is personal authority.

Bernard Ramm, The Pattern of Authority (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 21ff.

personalities in mutual respect. In the beginning God made man in His moral image that He might have fellowship with him. In that He has unconditioned existence, God's personality does not depend upon created existence. Of man it can only be said that he is complete when he has, by his own disposition, established rapport with Creator and creature. This relationship is not self-abnegation; it is self behaving itself toward God's will and human rights.

But as all men sooner or later realize, the accomplishment of Divine will, which desires that all men be united in love to one another and to God, is never realized by naturalistic processes. It is charged with a dilemma, irritated by human predilection, and proves to be insoluble apart from a radical decision on the part of the individual to seek outside assistance. This search is in response to the religious inclination of the soul.

Upon very good evidence the Christian assumes that the nascence of the moral predicament was in the uprising of the spirit of man over the authority of God. Having initially and sovereignly disassociated from sincere veneration of God, the integrity of personality being thus violated, the overbearing tendency of human nature has been to disregard the rights of others. The quest of man for unconditional control of his own life is threatened whenever personal notions are opposed. The result is disharmony, a sad departure from the infinitely better alternate, the essential morality of God and the moral constitution of man. Accordingly, and for a reason which is not native to judgment-minded man, God determined to restore to moral healthiness such persons as desired

to be healthy. Besides this, man becomes so rhapsodical in his inebriation that his vision of all reality is through blurred eyes. If God would recover such an one, the man must perceive that his condition, although natural, is not normal; that is, it is in violation of the essence of personality.

We are prepared, then, to state that the why of Divine revelation is redemptive. Revelation and morality coalesce in religious authority whenever the motive is the redemption of the human family by individual devotional commitment to God. Admittedly this proposition needs safeguards, some anticipatory of the methods of revelation. Suffice it to say here that the devotional commitment of which we speak is to Jesus Christ, the co-existent Son and Incarnate Word of God.

The writer recently came upon a sententious paragraph illustrating the redemptive goal of God's revelation.

"The commonwealth of childhood, when unspoiled by the bad example of adults, so called, is ideally of the order of the kingdom of heaven. A great philosopher has said: 'Rebirth or conversion for Christianity means a recovery of something which children have not yet lost. It might not occur to us to regard a child as a lover of God or of man, but what can be said of him is that with all his puny self-assertion his original sympathy with his enveloping personal world has not been broken'."<sup>1</sup>

This may or may not be accurate depending upon interpretation. To the present writer it suggests, however romantically,

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Matthew Sweet and Malcolm Stuart Sweet, The Pastoral Ministry in Our Time (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1949), p. 84. Quote from Hocking, Meaning of God in Human Existence (Yale University Press, 1912), p. 342.

the unpretentious discipline of human personality which is moral, that way of life to which God would recover man by the means of revealing Himself.

Life takes on a deeper dimension of meaning when cast in the light of the redemptive purpose of revelation. Morality, when incorporated by revelation, repudiates the innocuous platitudes of human moralisms, so that the embodiment of Truth immanent in man's scene of affairs conveys the transcendental nobility of the image of man, which God would save for His and man's eternal pleasure. If the reader will forbear, let the literature of great music be cited again. It is true that the most unskilled and inept of would-be virtuosi can accurately accomplish the twelve-note progression of the chromatic scale. However it takes the master's genius to give stature to those twelve tones by reproducing the majestic "Choral" Symphony of Ludwig von Beethoven. One seems suspended above the terrestrial order while those grand themes are brought to their finale. Here is musicale principle vindicated in noble purpose.

In a sense, more real than imaginative, the principles and forms of Morality may be duplicated by impious man, whose moralisms are like the idle repetitions of the chromatic scale, an end in itself. The Ninth Symphony, or the Brandenburg Concerti of Bach, or the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel are in those twelve notes, awaiting the master's hand. Morality may take a mechanical form, but its end is always dissonance. Divine revelation qualifies and teaches the purpose of human religiousness, just as the literature

of music gives meaning and expression to "note-ness". Revelation, therefore, is intrinsic in religious authority for it enables man to comprehend the purpose for living.

In addition, besides the desire of God to save man for His eternal fellowship, Divine revelation patternizes moral conduct so that man may know how to live in rapport with God and humanity. This again serves to distinguish moral integrity from moralism.

We may generalize, then, by saying that Divine revelation objectivizes Morality, which is the first principle of life, and gives it transcendent meaning. Its relation to religious authority is in its objective witness which withholds morality from the obliquities of exclusive subjectivism and immanence.

### III. TYPES OF REVELATION

Christian theology generally has standardized a two-fold classification of the modes of Divine revelation--General and Special.

General revelation includes those media which may be perceived by man in his moral predicament. These require no particular devotional disposition to understand the Divine authorship. Apprehension of God through general revelation is an intellectual attainment.

Wiley makes this definition.

"By General Revelation as the term is used in theology, we mean that disclosure of Himself which God makes to all men--in nature, in the constitution of the mind, and in the progress of human history."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wiley, op. cit., I, 126.



The soteriological function of general revelation is, as the preamble to special revelation, to confirm to the mind of obdurate man the existence and superintendence of God in the Universe, with the intention of recovering him for fellowship with God. General revelation is ineffacacious in itself to instruct man how he should live. It only somehow convinces him that there is a better way of living.

The Apostle Paul elucidated this principle when to the Christians at Galatia he wrote, "Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us into Christ, that we might be justified by faith."<sup>1</sup> The obvious law structure of the Universe (not the Law of which Paul spoke) serves as substitutional authority until, in devotion to Him Who is Ultimate Authority, man orders his life by moral precepts. Law serves constantly to remind man that he is not sovereign of all--though his way of life makes no overtures to God--and that he still owes allegiance to that phenomenal consistency without which he would lose all identity.

General revelation, then, is precursive to faith in God.

Special revelation is plainly redemptive in scope. Its function in the salvation of man is the satisfaction of the judgment against man the sinner, and the edification of redeemed man.

Again, we employ the explanation of Dr. Wiley upon this part of the subject.

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<sup>1</sup>Galatians 3:24.

"By Special Revelation we refer to the redemptive purpose of God manifested in Christ Jesus, as over against the more general revelation of His power as manifested in His creative works.

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 ". . . the fact that sin entered the world as an event later than the creative fiat, necessitates a special revelation if God's attitude toward sin is to be understood, and His purpose of redemption effectually made known to men."<sup>1</sup>

Religion without mystery would be no religion; it would be an humanistic science. General revelation, as harbinger of special revelation, acquaints man with the mystery of God, Creator, Provident Overlord of all. Special revelation penetrates the obscurity and fearsome visages of the "unknown God"<sup>2</sup>, unveiling His personality to all who requite His love and devote themselves to His Lordship.

The revelation of personality demands a personal medium. Jesus Christ is the focus of special revelation. Extra-personal modes of Divine revelation become vivified and redemptively efficacious when discerned in the light of God's Supreme Revelation in the person of His Son.

Excursus: Some Errors to be Avoided.

Before proceeding with the modes of Divine revelation, a caution seems appropriate which may well seep back through the discussion to this point.

Whenever an individual ventures to opine or to commit himself to a proposition of belief, there is latent within the man the

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<sup>1</sup>Wiley, op. cit., I, 135.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 17:23.

potential of error. His imperfect wisdom lends a predilection to tangency like a ball in orbit on the end of a string. He must be cognizant of this tension and be continually raising guards and compensative factors to preserve the orthodoxy of his thinking. For this very reason is there value in collective opinion.

Just as in the philosophy of religious authority one must frequently reassess his present position in relationship to the errors of subjectivism and authoritarianism, so must the doctrine of Divine revelation be kept from its polar errors of deism and pantheism, and from the perilous though sometimes ecclesiastically--advocated connotations of literalism or allegorism which make no room for plateaus of revelation within a univocal framework. It is expedient only to mention in the scope of this study that the religious authority attaching to particular Divine revelation must be determined carefully in the learning of its moral principles, which are immediate and transcendent, and in the absence of reactionary or subjective interpolations. Ramm has spoken lucidly to this:

"Unusually great care must be taken by the exegete and theologian, with reference to such matters as politics, economics, social relations, sex morality, and science, in differentiating what the Scriptures intend to teach from what they say by way of accommodation to make the revelation proper and meaningful to human consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

What is true of the Holy Scriptures applies to the apprehension and application of all other media of Divine revelation. The burden for moral responsibility is great upon the human intellect.

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 40. Emphasis marking is his.

#### IV. MODES OF DIVINE REVELATION

The balance of the present chapter shall present the several media of revelation, their common essence, their particular genius in the total economy of the Divine revelation, and their intrinsicity in religious authority.

##### General Revelation.

Cosmic Law. The orderliness and symmetry of cosmic phenomena presume a controlling Lordship. Flatulent attempts to rationalize an atheistic universe exhibit greater personal frenzy than scholarship. They witness more forcefully for the truth of Theism than for naturalistic theories.

The observation by man of the predictability and the uniformity of all things within their spheres, including the course of human history, reveals the superintending skill of God. The aesthetic values of the world tell man somewhat of the altruistic attributes of a God Who would create such beauty that embarks the soul upon transports of ecstasy.

Constitutional authority. The existence of constituted law in human society is revelatory. The disposition of man to obey mundane authority, so that he who violates the code pertaining to the public peace has not only an intellectual awareness of his sin but in addition, and concurrently, the censure of his conscience, is evidential of a metaphysical Authority. The personal administrations of the Arbiter of man's conscience is persuasive of His personality.

Man has but to ponder the complete attenuation of his personal world which would result from even a momentary suspension of moral impingements upon the human family. Peace forces, business ethics, fidelity in the home, the church, jurisprudence, all, and a complexity more, reveal God to the conscientious intellect.

Human history. The course of human events bears a two-fold witness to the person of God.

First, the beneficent ministrations to man which are gratuitous in respect to his own initiative, are suasive that humanity is contingent upon supernal influences. Daily sustenance, deliverances from danger, superhuman abilities in emergencies, these are temporal benefits. The betterment of society by inventive genius, the rise of one race in culture above other races, the lucrative explorations of terrestrial reaches, are not the result in an absolute sense of human aptitude.

Secondly, throughout human history calamities great and small have shaken the world. The fall of empires and the demolition of communities celebrated for their depravity have often been popularly understood as Divine imprecations. Solemn reflection, even among plain-spoken infidels, and revival of religious enthusiasm have been the eventuality.

On the other hand, God's dealings with man have the appearance of being constant. His non-capriciousness witnesses to His morality. Generally speaking, man believes that he can "count on" God.

The religious nature of man. That man is a religious being points to the Ground of his religiousness. It is profitable again to recognize Wiley:

"The philosophy of religion has shown that this natural religiousness of man is itself a revelation, and in its unfoldings, directly and of necessity leads to the revelation of the objective existence of God. Religion takes its moral character from the fact of conscience, by which man knows the fundamental distinction between right and wrong, and this leads immediately to the nature of the Supreme Being as holy."<sup>1</sup>

It is reiterative then to conclude that general revelation makes God's existence known to man but leaves him in his moral predicament. Naturalistic religions presume to redeem mankind by concentration upon the artfulness of the terrestrial scheme. Christianity is the religion of the Great Decision and soul-probing Experience with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

#### Special Revelation.

There are six interagents of special revelation.

Jesus Christ is the consummation of the revelatory enterprise. All engagements of the mind of man by Divine revelation are anticipatory of Christ. Inasmuch as this is but a section of the larger topic, our Christology must necessarily be synoptic.

The moral predicament of man is the consequence of intentional breach of fellowship with God. It amounts to a condition involving the whole man which is offensive to the morality and holiness of God. Leaving for a moment man's need for repentance,

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<sup>1</sup>Wiley, op. cit., I, 127.

common courtesy demands that the offender make amends to the offended. In more serious indignities the offender may be cited to appear before a constituted court to make reparations. What seems to the irreverent as evidence of a gloating God who enjoys seeing the sinner grovel in hope of pardon is a vulgarism. The moral constitution of man will not permit peace of mind so long as that man remains an impenitent offender. It is the nature of man that he must confess his guilt if he would be at rest within himself.

Therefore in one act of sincere repentance before God, which may involve reparations to offended persons, the inner man is pacified and the federal headship of God is satisfied. The attractiveness of this redemption is that God's supreme desire is restoration of rapport with man, so that instead of requiring penitential sacraments, He forgives the execution of the sentence which was a natural consequence of man's impiety. However, and in full harmony with the constitution of personality, one individual is not able to forgive the offense of a second person against a third party. The offender and offended must work out the restoration of fellowship between themselves. So the one who desires moral integrity comes first to God, defection from Whom was the original cause of the moral dilemma, and then re-establishes friendship with persons offended.

Now, the question remains, how has man been made aware of these sanctions? How can he know what moral integrity is, and accordingly what religious authority is? The answer is precisely in the person of Jesus Christ, co-equal with God the Father, and

once incarnate as God's revelation of Truth, residing in expiatory relationship to the sin of humanity. Bernard Ramm elucidates:

"Finally, [Jesus] appealed to His moral perfection as the seal of His authority. 'Which of you convicteth me of sin?', He asked the Jews in controversy with them (John 8:46). In context, our Lord is discussing the truth of God. The moral seal on His truthfulness is His moral perfection. A morally perfect person speaks the truth of God, for veracity is one of the virtues of morality."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ is the perfect representative of the Truth, for the Godhead is of one essence. He is the living, personal Word of God, "the supreme depository of the knowledge of God."<sup>2</sup> In that He was once One among many, and demonstrated moral perfection, man by conforming his life to that perfect Pattern discovers comprehensive peace which is elusive by any other means. Morality thus, besides having objective reality, becomes authority for the man himself.

The general modes of revelation incline man toward the Atonement; human history focuses upon the Christ. Theological error is the consequence of superiorizing any mode of revelation other than Christ. God's complete, and hence effacious revelation of the way man should govern his life converges in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the Interpreter of Truth. The person of the Holy Spirit, co-equal member of the Trinity, is in executive capacity and as such approaches man immediately, testifying of the atonement of Christ and the perfection of His character. Here let

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<sup>1</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 36.



something be perfectly understood. The function of revelation is incomplete until man perceives the Truth of God intrinsic in that particular mode of revelation. For instance, cosmic law reveals the existence and omnipotence of God. The form of this dictum is an accommodation to the point in issue. Religiousness is universal in the human consciousness. But it is catholic actually because the Holy Spirit in all ages has prompted the meaning of revelation to the minds of all men. The person of the Holy Spirit personalizes and individualizes the message of God.

To him who is skeptical we can but assert that the very fact that his mind conceptualizes God or Truth is confirmation of the ministry of the Spirit of God. And again, if a man should demean himself courteously toward at least the possibility of a Holy Spirit, he shall be perfectly assured of His nearness and administration.

With desire only to accentuate this truth which is indigen-  
ous in religious authority, and by which it coheres, we substitute  
for these faltering sentences the following quotations from the  
previously-cited "Richmond Declaration of Faith":

"We own no principle of spiritual light, life, or holiness,  
inherent by nature in mind or heart of man. We believe in no  
principle of spiritual light, life or holiness, but the influence  
of the Holy Spirit of God, bestowed on mankind, in various  
measures and degrees, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

.....  
"The Holy Spirit must ever be distinguished, both from the  
conscience which He enlightens, and from the natural faculty  
of reason, which when unsubjected to His Holy influence, is  
in the things of God, very foolishness.

.....  
"We disavow all professed illumination or spirituality that is

divorced from faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, crucified for us without the gates of Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup>

We conclude, therefore, that Jesus Christ is the substantial Revelation of morality; the Holy Spirit is coincidentally ever the Expositor of revelation to human understanding.

The Holy Scriptures are an accurate witness to the Divine revelation in Jesus Christ. This is a proposition which requires very precise definition. The purpose of the Scriptures must be well understood. The Bible is a compilation of writings from the pens of inspired men of faith. The reason for their inscripturization was to provide a history of God's relationship with humanity defected from righteousness. The Focus, the very hub of the Scriptures is Jesus Christ, God's utmost effort to recover humanity. The Scriptures are turgid with Christ and His Atonement. The continuity of the Old Testament is the promise of the Saviour of mankind. The continuity of the New Testament is the record of the first century of the Christian Church. The unique character of the Canon is preserved from later interpolations or additions by the fact that all of the authors of the New Testament were contemporary with the days of Jesus' incarnation, and all, except perhaps Paul, were personally acquainted with Him. It is probable that Paul had seen Jesus.

The Holy Spirit of God preserved the Scriptures from essential error in their autographic form, and has continued to

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<sup>1</sup>Constitution and Discipline, p. 22f.

exercise His influence in the preservation of the Message of the Scriptures unadulterated to the present time. This latter postulate rests upon credible evidence, not the least of which is the continuing popular appeal and efficacy of the Holy Scriptures.

The reason for Scripture is identified with the philosophy of Divine revelation--to redeem man through faith in Christ. To this purpose the Scriptures, in their unbiased translations, are true to present time. They are able to show man the way to God and instruct him in righteousness.

Now, however, we must make a negative declaration. The Holy Scriptures are not sufficient for salvation nor are they final authority, in their inscripturated conformation. Truth in concept always precedes Truth in linguistic symbols. Let the reader attend to these quotations:'

Edwin Lewis opines:

"Revelation comes not through documents, since revelation must precede any record of it, but it comes in life and experience according to the will of God and the response which he is able to evoke. It then becomes the function of documents to be the witness to the revelation and the means whereby it was secured. According as the witness is pondered by other minds, they too may come to possess and to be possessed by the truth which is witnessed, and to enter thereby into an experience sufficiently self-authenticating. . . . The logic of a Word of God more or less obscured because of its necessary articulation with the words of imperfect men--what is it? Is it not a Word given in a life of such a quality that the life is the perfect equation of the Word? In such a Word would not all other Words receive their vindication, their correction, their fulfillment, and their interpretation?"<sup>1</sup>

.....  
"Scripture gives us a body of indispensable fact and truth.

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, op. cit., p. 45f. Emphasis markings are his.

But all this is intended to issue in an experience. Scripture is a means to an end. It is instrumental, not final. The end is utter surrender to the Christ who is here portrayed and whose work is here declared."<sup>1</sup>

We may say then that the Holy Spirit, under Whose motivation man recorded the history of God's revelation, is the Interpreter of the truth contained therein. The Scriptures are authoritative in that in God's infinite wisdom a written, objective record of Truth is important to man's attainment of moral integrity; though not requisite, yet highly desirable. The Holy Spirit is ever capable of revealing Truth to the intellect unaided by objective instruments. However, as it seems to us, the inherent danger in human intellect is to extremity and error. Checks and counterchecks are of great value in preserving orthodox doctrine. The immediate witness of the Spirit can too easily be conformed to what the individual prefers to hear, and great confusion is wrought. Likewise can the literalness of inscripturated propositional truth preclude the careful and charitable spirit which accompanied its pre-Scriptural utterance. But together--the Spirit interpreting the objective form of the Word--the possibility of error is greatly diminished.

It is for this reason that it is highly desirable that the Scriptures be put into the hands of all men. Here is contained propositional truth about the moral life. However, God's effacacious revelation does not depend in full measure upon the Scriptures. Man has only to reflect upon his own inability to comprehend

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

all ideas with linguistic symbols to realize that the infinite revelation of God in its intricate relationships cannot be confined to language. One further caution, however apparent it may be, that the immediate Voice of God and the plain teaching of Scripture never diverge.

Alfred Bloom, in the Watchman-Examiner, has written on "A Perspective on Biblical Authority". He says, in part, "The authority of Scripture is the result of the work of God in the heart of a person so that he can see the truth revealed therein."<sup>1</sup> The context of Mr. Bloom's monograph is that although Truth has absoluteness, the recognition of Truth brings a concomitant avowal of the authoritative character of the medium of transmission of the Truth.

Ramm has many pertinent remarks at this point, from which we select the following:

"The delegation of authority by God is through the Holy Spirit who speaks the divine work of revelation in the prophet or apostle, and who creates the written record of revelation for other generations."<sup>2</sup>

The Bible is documented revelation. It is the only authoritative record of the way to moral living. Its religious authority is identified with the authority of the Holy Spirit Who preserved its message of redemption from essential error.

Christianity is the continuum of personal and objective revelation of Morality. Christianity has a trinitary essence.

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Bloom, "A Perspective on Biblical Authority", The Watchman-Examiner, March 10, 1955, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 27.

(1) Christianity is a system of doctrine. By Christianity is intended orthodox Christianity which comprises the essential doctrines of the major Christian creeds, viz., the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit--that is Trinitarian dogma; the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrine of the Church. Contempt of any or controversy over the constitutionality of any one of these doctrines gravitates precipitously away from Christianity.

Truth is conveyed in the history of theology. Ramm says,

"There are three reasons why the interpreter of revelation must pay due regard to the history of theology:

(1) "The Holy Spirit is the Teacher of the Church, and surely in some manner the history of theology reflects this teaching ministry.

(2) "The present Church is inheritor of all the great scholarship of the past.

(3) "Theological and ecclesiastical crises drive men to think deeper and clearer than they do in ordinary circumstances."<sup>1</sup>

The theology of Christianity provides an objective referent of Truth revealed by the Holy Spirit, through Scripture, and through the compendium of faithful scholarship.

(2) Christianity is a way of life. This is foremost in analyzing Christianity. Christianity is the moral life according to the perfection of Christ. The testimony of Christians is authoritative because the Truth has become personalized in moral living.

Rapport needs personal certification of authority. The highest revelation of a personal God can be transmitted only by personal media. This medium, the supreme Revelation, is Jesus Christ,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

exhibiting for all men until the end of the Age the life of Truth and morality in God. Conjointly, by the personal media of man dedicated to Christ, the Truth of God is transmitted perpetually in a more comprehensive than speculative mode. This personal transmission, coupled with the objective norm, the Scriptures, and illumined immediately by the Holy Spirit, gives assent to the Truth and sets up that reciprocal relationship necessary to faith, while yet leaving the Truth itself fully objective and independent in its authority.

(3) Christianity is a communion. It is both invisible, in that it is with God, and visible, forming ecclesiastical bodies. Christianity gives evidence of its Truth. Truth is unitary, that is, Truth tends to break down barriers between personalities and establish peaceful relationships. The ecumenicity of orthodox Christianity exemplifies its teaching. The moral "straightness" of its communicants authenticates the Truth. That true Christianity "works" to confirm and motivate and pacify life cannot be confuted.

## V. SUMMARY

We may draw this chapter to a close by reiterating that the philosophy of Divine revelation finds its laws in the desire of God to recover humanity from the predicament occasioned by its own refractoriness. God appointed mutually edifying modes of making known to man the way of life which would bring health of mind and peace of soul. The central figure of revelation is Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, Who was confirmed by the life of

moral perfection among men. The Holy Spirit interprets revelation immediately to the human consciousness, both general revelation to the obdurate, and special revelation to the respondents to the life which was in Christ.

Since the conclusions of this chapter are substantially a part of the general conclusions, these all will appear together in the succeeding chapter.



## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

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### CONCLUSION

Explicit specification is now warrented as to religious authority. Having proclaimed the Ultimate Authority of God, the conclusion that the writer makes has without doubt been implicit and expected. In justification of the conclusion, we submit the philosophies of Christianity, as adduced principally in chapters four and five, to the patent criteria of religious authority, outlined in chapter three.

Christianity is founded upon an infallible criterion of truth. It is the religion of morality according to Truth of God. It is faith in Him in whose essential image (not counterpart or facsimile) man is cast. Integrity, that which God IS, is the constitution of human conscience. The key word is responsibility. Christianity is the religion of responsible demeanor in the sight of God and in the total human society.

Christianity has ultimate certainty. Christianity is just as certain as the ultimacy of Christianity's God.

Christianity authenticates itself. Christianity is authenticated both objectively and subjectively, the latter of which will be mentioned here. The life of Christ in individual experience

(this term is used in the wider than ephemeral context) proves to the individual himself that this brings living to maturity. This is a persuasion unattainable by other religious systems.

It may be well to entertain here the anticipated question, "How do you know this for sure?" All men have experienced the moral predicament which gives rise to the multiformity of non-Christian schemes of religion, heathen or "cultured". The totality of individuals within Christendom undoubtedly represent in their pre-Christian religions every conceivable religious system, including humanism, naturalism, spiritualism, and all such. Yet the witness of the legion is harmonious--Christianity satisfies.

Christianity commends rather than compels obedience.

Christianity is not a religion of suppressionism. It presents the moral perfection of Jesus Christ as revealed by the Holy Scriptures, and by the moral living of Christians. The Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of men to behold the Truth. The Truth convinces of immorality, and this in turn, aided by the Divine Presence, arouses the individual to full responsibility toward the Truth. Christianity is the faith of those whose greatest delight is in living in the image of God. The consequence of such commitment to the Right is equitable relationship to all of humanity. Humanly constituted authority is cordially observed, and not from sense of fear of disobedience but rather in a disposition to do the right, so long as it is integrated with Ultimate Authority. Family relationships are unadulterated because the Christian loves his family. The intrinsic worth of the individual is carefully regarded.

In short we may say, the Christian commits himself to moral discipline because he wants to, not because he is in any wise coerced.

Christianity does not offend rapport. Christianity is not disunitive. It seeks the realization of the full powers of personality which, as we have seen, is constituted in morality. No conduct which offends public conscience can be considered as sanctioned by Christianity. However, here again a qualification. The Scriptures speak that natural man (that is man yet in his moral predicament) considers the things of the Spirit of God as foolishness.<sup>1</sup> The import is that these are considered foolishness (1) in subjective judgment, and (2) in hope and prospect of attainment. However, it must be recognized that society, however primitive, is structured by essential morality. It often is either misdirected or perverted, depending upon the degree to which culture has molded the community. The Scriptural passage cited presumed an intelligent man intellectually enlightened, assaying Christianity. Intelligent man dares not to attempt refutation of the premise that the public conscience, in essence, conforms to the principles of Christianity. That is, the community knows that its well-being will best be served by observance of Christian principles. Thus Christianity is objectively authenticated.

Christianity is reciprocal. Christianity recognizes the alternative which is necessary to personality. Any other religion

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<sup>1</sup>I Corinthians 2:14.

is non-absolute, wherein resultantly there is no potential of choice for there is nothing finally better than another thing. All is relative.

Personality is eviscerated in a relative system. There must be truth and the sovereign-response potential to insure personality. This Christianity "provides". It declares that God IS Truth and Morality. That which is contrary to the image of God is immorality. Man is sovereignly responsible in his choice and the consequences of it.

Christianity is seen in the light of its Source. The religion of supernal Deity provides the mystic value essential to religion. Natural "religions" are devoid of mystery. Christianity is the religion of the Absolute and Sovereign of the Universe.

Christianity coheres. Within the philosophy or theology of Christianity are no elements which are mutually exclusive. It is rational, yet it does not terminate in the reason. It is mystical, but can be intellectually defended. Christianity is in the best position to give a rational account for the Universe. Its teleology leaves nothing to chance. Its God is Personal, and its Lord lives.

We conclude that the archetype of religious authority is the One Who is Ultimate Authority, the Eternal God. Religious authority attests the Truth.

Christianity, as interpreted by the whole tenor of this study, is, preclusively, religious authority.

And now, having presented what he considers to be a rationale on the authority of Christianity, the writer wishes to conclude with hallowed words from The Messiah of George Frederick Handel, thoughts which express the Christian hope.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though decay destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep.

"Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

"KING of Kings, and LORD of Lords. Hallelujah!"

This is the confidence of the Christian.

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