

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY IN REVELATION

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by  
Douglas Stephen Bax  
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## PREFACE

The problem of authority in religion can be stated as follows: what is the finally authoritative source and judge of religious truth? This was the fundamental question which Jesus Himself raised when He came to the Jews. It was the fundamental problem of the Reformation. It is also the fundamental problem that confronts the Church in our time. But it has never ceased to be the perennial question underlying all religious and philosophical thought.

The world today is in an age of transition. The tremendous progress of science has changed the face of society. Traditional mores, traditional outlooks and 'world-views', traditional ideals and principles of belief, thought and conduct, all these have been swept relentlessly into the melting pot. We are in the midst of social, political, and economic upheaval. In the words of Professor Dodd who expresses the verdict of Arnold Toynbee, "We stand at the end of an era."<sup>1</sup> Truth itself has been declared relative by the modern mind. But this is at its profoundest the admission of the insufficiency of human knowledge and the sign of a desperate yearning for a sure voice.

Out of the midst of its confusion the world cries for an authoritative answer to its deepest questionings. The Church alone can give that answer. But the Church itself is rent by the problem of authority: whether its ultimate authority is the Church or the Bible, the Pope or Reason, Tradition or the Inner Light - or none of these. Before it can answer the crucial question for which the world seeks an answer it must answer the crucial question with which it itself is faced. But the question is the same: "By what authority do you proclaim this gospel?" This is the question with which we are here concerned.

In writing this thesis my warm thanks are due to the Rev. Dr. W.D. Maxwell, my Professor, to the Rev. Dr. W. Cosser, who very kindly

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<sup>1</sup>C.H. Dodd, The Bible Today, p.125.

translated portions of Le Problème Biblique dans le Protestantisme from the French for me, and to Father Philip Prime, S.J., who translated the Vatican decree, De Ecclesia Christi.

Finally, a word of explanation concerning the footnotes.

As I have listed the full particulars concerning the author, title, publishers and date of publication of the books which were my main sources in the bibliography (under the chapters for which they are particularly relevant) I have given only the author and title when citing them. When citing any book which has served only for one or two references or quotations I have given the full particulars in the footnote but have omitted it from the bibliography.

## SUMMARY

### Introduction: The Nature of the Content of Revelation

The old concept of the content of revelation was "truths" of revealed knowledge. The new concept of it speaks of it as being God Himself. But revelation includes truth, though not "truths."

### Chapter I: Authority in the Age of the Old Testament

The age of the Old Testament already exhibited the problem of authority in revelation in its many aspects. But the prophets, the men 'par excellence' who were mediums of revelation, had one supreme authority: God speaking His Word immediately.

### Chapter II: Authority in the Age of the Incarnation

Jesus was the same as the prophets in this. But He also radically subjected all other authorities, including Scripture, (his attitude to which seems to have involved a tension), Tradition, and Church, to His own authority. His commission to the apostles and Peter did not involve any "succession" infallible in doctrine. His miracles emphasize the impossibility of any supreme external authorities.

### Chapter III: Authority in the Age of the Apostle

The apostles inherited the concept of the Old Testament as infallible but subjected it to the new Word. They exalted the authority of the 'paradosis' they transmitted. Paul gave authority to the Inner Light but subjected it to the 'paradosis.' The apostles had a unique, non-transferable authority as depositaries of the 'paradosis.' However, they did not claim infallibility (in writing the New Testament for instance). The ministry of the New Testament Church was fluid in form and had only an essentially delegated authority. Peter was not the first Pope. New Testament authority was a 'dynamic' authority.

### Chapter IV: Authority in the Age after the Apostle

The early Church gave infallible authority to the Bible but not consistently, and by implication subjected it to the authority of the Word which came through Scripture. The incarnation of the apostolic 'paradosis' in the New Testament was an acknowledgement that the 'living tradition' of the Church must be subjected to it. An infallible formal authority in the apostolic "succession" emerged alongside the material authority of Scripture. The main attitude to reason later found expression in Augustine's 'credo ut intellegam.' 'Dynamic' authority deteriorated into tests of doctrinal and ethical integrity and apostolic "succession."

### Chapter V: Authority in the Medieval Ages

The development of the authority of the Church's 'tradition' and its 'depositaries,' the hierarchy, led in practice to the subordination of the authority of Scripture. Aquinas attempted to relate the authorities of reason and revelation in his 'medieval synthesis' by assigning to each different areas of knowledge. Somewhat inconsistently, he approached the Reformation doctrine of the witness of the Spirit.

### Chapter VI: Authority in the Age of the Reformation

Luther opposed the teaching of the Church because it substituted human philosophy for God's Word. He was forced into opposing the authority of Pope and Councils by exalting to supreme place the authority of the Word, which he did not identify with Scripture as such but with a content of Scripture decided by his own experience. Calvin also subjected all to the authority of the Word, but he identified it with the whole of Scripture. His doctrines of the intrinsic coercive power of truth and of the witness of the Spirit were profound contributions to the subject.

### Chapter VII: Authority in the Modern Age

Roman Catholicism: The Roman Church regards Scripture as infallibly inspired but gives to Tradition an authority equal to it and subjects all to the supreme authority of the Pope. But its theories of Tradition, of the Councils, and of the Papacy do not hold water.

Fundamentalism: The Fundamentalists maintain the inerrant, infallible authority of the Bible, citing the example of the Scriptural writers and of Jesus Himself to support their attitude and dismissing the questions of modern thought as irrelevant. If the Bible is not right in its doctrine of inspiration all its doctrines are impugned. Different theories of inspiration are advanced. But Fundamentalism's doctrine of the Bible is both dangerous today and unable to withstand criticism.

The School of the Inner Light: The emphasis of this school can be traced from the prophets through Montanism, the mystics and the Anabaptists to such movements as the Society of Friends. But when it receives exclusive stress it results in subjectivism and distortions of Christianity.

Rationalism: The exaltation of the reason by an extreme element in the early Church and the medieval idea of reason discovering religious "truths" were followed by humanism, deism and 'liberalism.' Reason always proceeds from a principle of faith.

#### Conclusion

The answer to the problem of authority lies in taking seriously the supreme authority of God, though not necessarily God-as-we-hear-Him. Only by God's grace can we know the truth. God's Word breaks into the sphere of human existence from the ultimate, thereby becoming 'conditioned.' All Scripture, decrees and doctrine are conditioned 'formulations' of it. The Word must be heard through these but remains itself the only ultimate authority. The Word is the 'norm.' It must be sought existentially and heard immediately. The need for a new emphasis upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE NATURE OF THE CONTENT OF REVELATION

In our examination of the problem of authority in revelation we must begin by asking the question, "What is the content of revelation?"<sup>1</sup> An answer to this question has been made crucial by what has been called "perhaps the greatest revolution that has ever taken place in the history of Christian thought"<sup>2</sup> - the application to the Scriptures of the methods of historical and literary criticism - which has made impossible the old understanding of the nature of the content of revelation. This revolution is still under way, and its consequences for a fuller understanding of revelation and its content are still in process of being perceived.<sup>3</sup> Before the Church can answer the question of authority it must first understand clearly what is the content of the revelation for which it seeks authority.

### THE OLD CONCEPT OF THE CONTENT OF REVELATION

No thorough attempt to elaborate what was the content of what the Church meant by "revelation" was made until comparatively recent times. "Throughout the greater part of Christian history the question was not thought to be a difficult one."<sup>4</sup> "In older theological works we search in vain for any comprehensive reflection upon the nature of the revelation<sup>5</sup> upon which the Christian faith is based."<sup>6</sup> The nature of that content was assumed rather than explicitly thought out.

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<sup>1</sup>Frequent confusion results from the use of the word 'revelation' indiscriminately to mean both 'the content of revelation' (i.e. what is revealed) and 'the revealing activity of God' (by which that content is revealed). This is seen for instance in Brunner's saying that "in the time of the Apostles... 'divine revelation' always meant the whole of the divine activity for the salvation of the world" while in the second century it came to mean "doctrine" (Revelation and Reason, p.8f.). This is meant to be the contrast of two different understandings of the same thing, but instead becomes a contrast between two different things; and thus becomes one of the sources of the confusion which is discussed in the following pages. We therefore shall use the words, 'content of revelation' whenever we mean what is revealed.

<sup>2</sup>Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.112.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.3.

<sup>5</sup>i.e. the content of revelation.

<sup>6</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.7.

In its conflicts with heresy, beginning with the struggle against the errors of Gnosticism in the second century,<sup>7</sup> the Church had sought to make herself the infallible judge of true and false teaching by stressing the authority of dogma. This emphasis had made actual an understanding of the nature of the content of revelation which was already potential owing to the doctrine of inspiration the Church had inherited from Judaism,<sup>8</sup> and also to the "exaggerated intellectualism" which it inherited from the Greek philosophy.<sup>9</sup> The content of revelation came to be understood as simply the supernatural doctrine itself, divinely given in the Scriptures, and clearly formulated in the dogma of the Church.<sup>10</sup>

During the Middle Ages an assumption lay behind the thinking of the scholastics which prevented theology from coming to any truer concept of the content of revelation. The notion of the Greeks that there was a universal Mind or Reason ('Nous') of which men's minds were particularizations had become transformed into an assumption of a universal rationality, an assumption that everything that could be known was expressible in a proposition in logical relation to all other propositions, in Medieval thought. This assumption lay behind the philosophical thought of St Thomas Aquinas himself.<sup>11</sup>

It was this assumption that was the source of the division into "truths of reason" and "truths of revelation" so characteristic of the older theological systems. According to it the content of revelation was characterised by St Thomas as "divine truth", which was "a communication delivered for our belief," in contrast to truths reached "by the natural light of reason".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Brunner, *op. cit.*, p.8

<sup>8</sup> See the Appendix

<sup>9</sup> William Temple, quoted by Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, p.33

<sup>10</sup> Brunner, *op. cit.*, p.9

<sup>11</sup> Robinson, notes on *The Definition and Scope of Theology*

<sup>12</sup> Cf. here Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, p.112 ff.

Except that some theologians before the thirteenth century had been optimistic enough about the powers of the rational mind to think that most, if not all, of the knowledge of God contained in these two divisions could be reached, ideally, by the reason alone,<sup>13</sup> this conception of revelation was fundamentally the same as that which prevailed before Aquinas had written his Summa Theologica. And the definition of revelation as the communication of a body of knowledge was to remain unchallenged long after the time of Aquinas.

The Reformers later came to put less emphasis on the function of reason in acquiring revelation, because of their stress on the corruption of the whole man by sin, including his reason. Later the rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (e.g., Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the Deists) contrarily came to exalt reason to supreme place (sometimes to the exclusion of any supernatural revelation whatsoever). But neither the Reformers nor the rationalists really quarrelled with the traditional understanding of the content of revelation as a body of truth.

As late as the nineteenth century we find this concept still prevalent. In a popular textbook of Protestant theology published in 1860 (thirty-nine years after the first German edition of Schleiermacher's Der christliche Glaube<sup>14</sup>) and entitled Outlines of Theology the author, A.A. Hodge, tells us that revelation is the supernatural impartation of truth objective to the recipient, and that this truth is wholly contained in the Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> And even in a volume of the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics published in 1918 H.L. Goudge maintains that the word "revelation" "stands...for the body of truth which God has made known."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

<sup>14</sup>See p. 6. The English edition was published in 1928.

<sup>15</sup>Cited by Robinson, Notes on A Discussion of the Topic of Revelation.

<sup>16</sup>Goudge, "Revelation," ed. Hastings, E.R.E., Vol.X, p.745.

The old understanding of the matter, therefore, meant that:

(1) The content of revelation consisted of truths or propositions of revealed knowledge, "truth supernaturally communicated to men in propositional form."<sup>17</sup> It was something severely intellectual and fundamentally external.

When the content of revelation is presented in this form, as propositions objectively given to be accepted as truth, it cannot enliven, quicken, or inspire.

(2) Revelation, the revealing activity of God or the process by which He makes known to man the content of revelation, was equated with the inspiration<sup>18</sup> of the Scriptures which was defined as "a constant experience of the sacred writers in all they wrote" effecting "the equal infallibility of all the elements of the writings they produced."<sup>19</sup> As it included "all the elements" contained in the Scriptures this applied to "natural truths" as well as "revealed truths," i.e., it applied to a wider field than the content of actual revelation. This concept "leaves out of account the decisive<sup>20</sup> element in the Biblical revelation, namely, its historical character."

(3) Faith, i.e., the response to revelation, came to mean a merely arbitrary intellectual assent to the external truths which made up the content of revelation, the intellectual "acceptance of such information upon authority."<sup>21</sup> This is in contrast to St Paul's understanding of faith as a response of the whole man.<sup>22</sup> "A 'believer' is now no longer, as in the New Testament, a person claimed and transformed by Jesus Christ, but a person who accepts what the Church offers him as divinely revealed doctrine."<sup>23</sup> It is thus that Goudge,<sup>24</sup> for instance, stresses the need of "intelligent" beings for the revelation to be received. It was this mistake which had

<sup>17</sup> Richardson, op. cit., p.110.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Brunner, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>19</sup> A.A. Hodge, quoted Robinson, Notes on A Discussion of the Topic of Revelation.

<sup>20</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.99 q.v.

<sup>21</sup> Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, p.112.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Gal.2:20; 11 Cor.5:17 etc. Cf. also Jon.3:3

<sup>23</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>24</sup> Goudge, op. cit., p.745. Contrast the words of Jesus in Mt.11:25.

inevitably led to the medieval stress on justification by works, for "what does it profit, my brethren, if a man say he has faith"<sup>25</sup> when that faith means mere intellectual assent,<sup>26</sup> and not something which has transformed the whole man? Inevitably too faith came to be regarded as a preliminary stage which would pass away as imperfect when the perfect, i.e., direct, knowledge of God came.<sup>27</sup> The implication was also that the theologian had much more perfect faith seeing that he alone knew all, or nearly all, the truths to which faith responded!

(4) Theology came to be "the task of the theologian...to discover the meanings of the scriptural words - their literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical meanings - and then to arrange these meanings and present them in the form of a complete system of dogma."<sup>28</sup>

#### THE NEW CONCEPT OF THE CONTENT OF REVELATION

It seems incomprehensible that this old understanding of these things could endure, and in the end three things contributed to the break-up of the old concept of the content of revelation on which it was based.

The first of these, a negative contribution, was the advance of modern scientific knowledge, which showed the errancy of some of the "natural truths" expressed in the Bible, especially the Biblical views of space (the three-storeyed universe), time (the age of the world), and primeval history (the literal interpretation of Genesis chapter three).<sup>29</sup>

The second was also on the negative side: the advent of historical and literary criticism in the nineteenth century, owing to the extension of the scientific attitude and method to the study of

<sup>25</sup> Js.2:14.

<sup>26</sup> The sense in which James spoke of it: cf. Js.2:19.

<sup>27</sup> Contrast Paul in I Cor.13:13. Cf. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, p.116-118, and Brunner, op. cit., p.178f.

<sup>28</sup> Richardson, op. cit., p.110.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Brunner, op. cit., p.277ff. It is probably true to say that although theologians always assign the break-down of the old concept of scientific historical and literary criticism they seldom mention that this was also a contributory cause. But it is the cause which has weighed most heavily in the popular mind.

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 literature. The application of this to the Bible represented a revolutionary approach and rendered it impossible to continue to hold the old concept of the content of revelation. This forced the theologians of the later nineteenth and the twentieth centuries to ask themselves, "If the content of the Christian revelation cannot consist in the divinely given, infallible Scriptures, what then is that content and how is it given?" Thus "for the first time in the history of theology, revelation, in its whole historical reality, became the object of theological reflection."<sup>31</sup>

But already before this there had emerged something on the positive side, a movement of theological thought which was to fill the vacuum that the two previous negative contributions were yet to create. This movement had its origin in Schleiermacher and, as Mackintosh defines it,<sup>32</sup> his "theology of feeling." The publication of his book, The Christian Faith, in 1821<sup>33</sup> set off a Copernican revolution in theology. Already before him Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), by his moral principle that persons should always be treated as ends and never as means only, distinguished between the world of things and the world of people and so prepared the way for the distinction between the world of objects and the world of subjects.<sup>34</sup> But it was really Schleiermacher who put theology on the new track. He sought a new foundation for theology and found it in the religious self-consciousness of the Christian community. This consciousness Schleiermacher conceived as a variety of feeling and thus came to define faith as a feeling of absolute dependence, dependence on the redemption wrought by God in Christ.<sup>35</sup> This conception of faith has been vehemently repudiated, but the outlines of the conception of revelation in which it resulted are still held today.

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<sup>30</sup> A good summary of the results of this is ed. T.W. Manson, A Companion to the Bible, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1939.

<sup>31</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.11.

<sup>32</sup> Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.31ff.

<sup>33</sup> The date given by Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.12n. is wrong.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

<sup>35</sup> Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.12f.

He saw clearly that the content of revelation does not originally and essentially consist of "truths" or doctrine, and therefore denied that revelation "operates on man as a cognitive being,"<sup>36</sup> speaking instead of God working "upon us directly as a distinctive existence by means of His total impression upon us."<sup>37</sup>

This aspect of Schleiermacher's work was further consolidated by the labours of his disciple, Ritschl,<sup>38</sup> but it was the work of the great Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), that made the next great advance when its significance came to be realized long after his death. Kierkegaard was concerned to validate the all-importance of existential thinking - thinking that is concerned with persons, with oneself, with one's neighbour, and above all with God (for only human thinking which is against the ultimate reality of God, the supreme Subject, is fully existential) - as against mere spectatorial thinking. He thus laid emphasis on the world of personal relationships, the category of the personal, and the difference between subject and object.<sup>39</sup>

In the twentieth century thinkers have given more and more attention to this, with the result that theology now has a fresh and much more adequate intellectual apparatus to deal with the task of understanding and explaining the nature of revelation. This is especially evident in the work of Ferdinand Ebner, The Word and Spiritual Realities, published in 1921, and Martin Buber's I and Thou, published a year or two later.<sup>40</sup> Buber's book has been called "a work of great significance...climaxing a development of human thought."<sup>41</sup> Thus theologians have come to see the world of experience as consisting of two dimensions, that of objects, with which man's consciousness stands in an "I-it" relationship, and that of subjects, between which

<sup>36</sup>Schleiermacher, quoted by Baillie, Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Schleiermacher, quoted by Robinson, A Discussion of the Topic of Revelation.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.152-156

<sup>39</sup>Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

<sup>40</sup>M. Buber, I and Thou, Edinburgh, T.&T.Clark, 1942 (translated R.G. Smith).

<sup>41</sup>Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

the "I-thou" relationship exists, and to discern that it is in the context of the second of these that revelation takes place. In revelation man is personally addressed;<sup>42</sup> "truths do not come to us.... But God comes to us, and lays hold of us."<sup>43</sup> Revelation itself consists in "encounter as self-disclosure,"<sup>44</sup> "the meeting of two subjects, the divine and the human."<sup>45</sup> "The divine Thou addresses me, in love."<sup>46, 47</sup>

#### CRITICISM OF THE NEW CONCEPT

With all this of course we must agree. It is a much truer understanding of what the Christian revelation always has been, for "the revelation of which the Bible speaks is always such as has taken place within a personal relationship."<sup>48</sup> It is much better able to take account of what Baillie calls the "characteristic disturbance...set up in the human soul and in the life of our human society"<sup>49</sup> when a man is confronted with the living God in revelation. It realizes that merely intellectual belief is not faith but a substitute for faith,<sup>50</sup> and that true faith is a personal relationship.<sup>51</sup> It also has resulted in the categories of general and special revelation, more adequate as they are than those of natural

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<sup>42</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.153.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.201.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.178n.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.32.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.370.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. also W.H.G. Robinson, Theology and the Personal (Inaugural Lecture to Rhodes University), Grahamstown, Grocott and Sherry, 1954.

<sup>48</sup> Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.24.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Our Knowledge of God, p.3.

<sup>50</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.428, 420f.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 36-42.

and revealed truths in the analysis of the content of revelation.<sup>52</sup>

Yet the modern understanding of the matter must be criticised - on two scores. The first is that advanced by William Wolf in his new study of the atonement, where he points out that the limiting of revelation to the I-thou relationship in modern theology leaves out the essential Biblical idea of the redemption of the body, by "pushing down to insignificance" the world of I-it (in which the body is involved).<sup>53</sup>

The second criticism - one with which we are more directly concerned - is immediately related to this: it is that this limitation betrays a serious defect in modern theology's formal understanding of the content of revelation. Baillie cites, with his own approval, and the implied approval of "recent thought" generally, as perhaps the first typical modern definition of this content that of William Herrman of Marburg in 1887: "God is the content of revelation. All revelation is the self-manifestation of God."<sup>54</sup> And Brunner's definition is: "The real content of revelation in the Bible is not 'something,' but God Himself."<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Archbishop Temple maintains, "There is no such thing as revealed truth. There are truths of revelation; but they are not themselves directly revealed": what is revealed is "the living God Himself."<sup>56</sup>

This is characteristic: the modern limitation of revelation to the I-thou sphere leaves no room for the content of revelation to include any "objective" element - as Baillie<sup>57</sup> and Brunner<sup>58</sup> specifically deny that it does. Thus the content of revelation can include nothing but God Himself, the supreme Subject.

As we have said, however, this betrays a serious confusion. When we look at our faith without seeing it through the veil which is over

<sup>52</sup>On this see further Richardson, op. cit., ch.5-6, Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, ch.1.

<sup>53</sup>See further W. Wolf, No Cross, No Crown, ch.10.

<sup>54</sup>Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.33; italics original

<sup>55</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p.25. Italics original.

<sup>56</sup>W. Temple, quoted Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.33. Cf. also Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.145 etc.

<sup>57</sup>Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p. 32ff.

<sup>58</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p.32ff., 178n.

our face after reading Buber, are we not naturally compelled to answer the question whether the content of the Christian revelation does not include something objective, in the affirmative? Was not the idea or principle of justification by faith - to take what has been called the very "heart of the Bible"<sup>59</sup> - itself a revelation in this sense? To deny this, to insist that the content of revelation is 'God' and God only, is to say that the idea of justification by faith is (i) included in what we mean by the term, 'God', or (ii) a direct inference from the revelation of God as Subject, or (iii) pure speculation on the part of St Paul. Neither (i) nor (iii) are acceptable to Christian faith; and (ii) is not tenable either. For if revelation consisted essentially and wholly in a confrontation with a Subject, how could I infer any such principle from the confrontation per se - unless the Subject "said" something to me or caused me to experience something from which it could be inferred; and then, what was "said" or experienced would immediately constitute something objective.

Similarly, we may ask, was not the idea of immortality revealed truth? When God revealed to the prophets the coming downfall or preservation<sup>60</sup> of their nation, even when all things seemed to point to the contrary, was that not something objective revealed? In the same way Jesus came teaching and healing and so revealed God in Himself, but at the same time what He taught, the gospel He proclaimed, was a revealed something, an objective revelation, "truth". And He Himself certainly seems to have understood this content of what He came to reveal as such (Mk.4:11; Jn.8:32, 16:13, 1:17; cf. St Paul's understanding of it in Ro.16:25; I Cor.5:51; Eph. passim).

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<sup>59</sup>Brunner, *op. cit.*, p.29. Cf. A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, London, S.C.M., 1952, p.16-18.

<sup>60</sup>Cf., e.g., Isa.37.

The content of the Christian revelation cannot be characterized as devoid of objective truth. If it were it would be a mere sense of the numinous. If the content of revelation were merely 'God', Christianity would be merely 'mysticism'. This is clearly seen in the dangerous but logical implication of Baillie's words when he opposes the old concept of revelation as God's "giving us information by communication," by saying without any compromise that "we must rather think of Him as giving Himself to us in communion."<sup>61</sup> But it is precisely the fact that the Christian revelation is a revelation of truth that makes the difference between it and a mere pantheistic mysticism. It is, moreover, precisely because of this fact that there is a "problem of authority." Were the Christian revelation merely a mystical confrontation of the divine 'Thou', Christianity could be described completely in terms of an "experience", and there would be no need for an authority to interpret or judge the truth of the revelation because there would be no truth to be judged or interpreted.

That the modern formal understanding of the content of revelation is inadequate in its oneness is shown by reactions against it such as that of Dr. Austin Farrer, who, in his Bampton lectures, realizing that we cannot return to the old concept of revealed propositions of truth, yet denies that God is not to be known by us unless He reveals Himself personally, and asserts instead that the content of revelation is truth given to us through "images." Baillie's criticism of this theory is successful because God is known only personally; but he fails to discern the truth Farrer has perceived, viz., that the content of revelation does include truth.<sup>62, 63</sup> It is, moreover, precisely because the content does include truth that the old conception of revelation was able to stand unquestioned

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<sup>61</sup>Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.49

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 36-40.

<sup>63</sup>The same applies, of course, to modern criticisms of the fundamentalists' conception of revelation.

for so long.

The inadequacy of the modern formal understanding of the content of revelation is further shown by the fact that although their formal understanding of it excludes "truth," yet actually Brunner and Baillie, for instance, are unable to express themselves without attributing truth or an objective element to the content of revelation. Thus Brunner, although he limits revelation to the communication of a Subject,<sup>64</sup> is yet found in other places talking of the word of the Apostles as itself "part of the revelation of God,"<sup>65</sup> of Holy Scripture as "itself the revelation,"<sup>66</sup> the doctrinal content of the Bible as "also a form of His revelation,"<sup>67</sup> at the same time as he says, in definite denial, "Divine revelation is not a book or a doctrine."<sup>68, 69</sup> Similarly Paillie writes such a contradictory statement as, "What is revealed to us is a body of information... If it is information at all, it is information concerning the nature and mind and purpose of God... Yet in the last resort it is not information about God...."<sup>70</sup> Another example is Leonard Hodgson, who denies that the revelation of God is "given in words,"<sup>71</sup> yet at the same time speaks of "revealed doctrine."<sup>72, 73.</sup>

It is also this confusion that lies behind Brunner's characterization of the content of general revelation as impersonal when he says that in general revelation God "does not meet man personally, but impersonally."<sup>74</sup> But, as Barth has criticized this, "how can there possibly be an impersonal revelation of the God who is most truly personal in His

<sup>64</sup>See above. Cf. Brunner, op. cit., p.24, 25, 32f., 36ff., 179, 200, 370.

<sup>65</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p.122.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p21 cf. p.135.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p.8. We may compare his statement about "the fundamental error which equates the revelation with revealed doctrine," Ibid., p.8n.

<sup>69</sup>In all these quotations he means by "revelation" what we have been calling "the content of revelation," of course.

<sup>70</sup>Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.28.

<sup>71</sup>Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Trinity, p.19, 35.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p.16.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. also Barth, in Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.288ff.

<sup>74</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p.76. Cf. p.97.

entire being and in all His activities?"<sup>75</sup> What neither Barth nor Brunner<sup>76</sup> perceive, however, is that this confusion is owing to the fact that all revelation includes an element of "truth" in its content.<sup>77</sup>

The cause of the confusion on the point we have been discussing is that, like most reactions, the reaction against the old conception of the content of revelation has become too extreme and onesided, and has been unable to see the truth that there was in the old position, truth which is complementary to its own insight. In reacting against the old understanding of the content of revelation as "doctrine" or "truths," in the sense of propositions of knowledge (and also against the understanding of it as "timeless" or "eternal truths" in rationalistic liberal theology), modern theologians have seized on Buber's emphasis that we know God as Subject as the complete answer. Too rigid a contrast between the spheres of subject and object has thus been made, and in the reaction truth has been characterized as barren, external, intellectualistic, in contrast to the personal character of the I-thou sphere. Thus it has not been seen clearly that to know God truly we also need to know about God, just as we cannot truly get to know an ordinary fellowman as subject, without getting to know about him at the same time. Jewish mystics, in whose line Buber stands, might well more easily slip into thinking it as altogether sufficient to know 'God as Subject,' but this should not be so in Christianity which has always emphasized the objective element in the content of revelation, the Gospel that is preached, the way of salvation that is revealed.

How then, it may be asked, are we to state more adequately the content of revelation? By placing a clearer emphasis on the fact that the category of the existential, as Kierkegaard has explained it, includes both a subjective and an objective element, instead of merely contrasting the spheres of I-thou and I-it. In the reaction from the old conception of revelation as "truths" we have come to regard the communication of all

<sup>75</sup>Barth, Natural Theology, p.21, quoted by Robinson, Notes on A Discussion of the Topic of Revelation.

<sup>76</sup>Nor Robinson.

<sup>77</sup>This confusion also extends to the use of the phrase, "the Word of God," in the tendency to fail to distinguish the "Word" which God speaks in the Bible, and the Word which is God in Christ. Cf. Brunner, op. cit., p.118f., Mackintosh on Barth, Types of Modern Theology, p.288-294.

"truth" as foreign to it because of a failure to grasp firmly enough Kierkegaard's distinction between what we might call propositional or intellectual or theoretical truths and truth existentially received, i.e., truth which is more than merely abstract propositions, truth which appeals to the whole being, to the heart and soul and will, as well as to the mind. Mere "truths" are abstractions from reality; the truth which revelation brings is reality.

One of the causes of the failure to grasp this clearly has been the influence of modern philosophical thought which has limited the meaning of "truth" to what is logically proved (e.g. in Logical Positivism). But the deepest truth has always been essentially existential. Justification by faith was not a barren speculative fact to St Paul but a living experience of sins forgiven. The truth received in revelation cannot be appropriated in an impartial examination or perception but only in an act of personal surrender and decision. Hence the words of Jesus concerning him who <sup>78</sup> "doeth the truth." This is because the revelation of God's truth is not aimed at merely imparting knowledge but at effecting reconciliation and fellowship with Him.

Revelation thus is revelation of God and at the same time revelation of truth. As opposed to mere mysticism, in the Christian revelation God addresses man in the revelation of Himself and this "Word" which God speaks is the objective element in the content of revelation. We may characterize it as truth, but it is truth which can be properly received only existentially. <sup>79</sup> Only when it is existentially received does it become God's Word to me. The truth itself is something objective

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<sup>78</sup>Jn. 3:21.

<sup>79</sup>"If any man's will is to do His will (i.e., if he receives it existentially), he shall know whether the teaching (truth) is from God," Jn. 7:17, R.S.V.

(e.g., the knowledge of the fate of Israel, the knowledge of immortality), but only when it is existentially received does it become God's Word, God's revelation to us: only then is it addressed to us by God. And then, and only then, God Himself, the supreme Subject, is revealed, giving His truth. Or, more accurately, only in His revealing of His truth do we become aware<sup>80, 81</sup> of the God who continually confronts us.

When God's Word is intellectually formulated, however, when it is transformed into "Scripture" or "doctrine," it ceases to be a living Word, and therefore ceases to be fully God's Word to us, to be the content of a revelation. It now becomes something which we can grasp instead of something which grasps us, something which can be impartially "learnt." It has now become something which even an unbeliever can "learn" and pass examinations in. It is thus no longer truly God's Word: it has become the carcass of that Word. But God is able to use this "carcass" to be a vehicle of His living Word, and through it to "address" us once more in revelation. The formulation of the Word is important because the Word is revealed only through correct doctrine (though it is not contained or limited by correct doctrine).

Thus we see that the Bible is not merely "the record of revelation,"<sup>82</sup> or "the witness to revelation," or even "the indispensable witness to revelation,"<sup>83</sup> as Brunner and Robinson, for instance define it to be. It is the "formulation," or expression in (human) words, of the content of the revelation and the experiences of the revelation by men to whom the revelation came, not merely the indispensable witness to it, i.e., not merely something completely external to it, a mere appendage

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Paul Tillich's sermon on Ps.139, "The Escape from God," in Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, New York, Scribner's, 1955.

<sup>81</sup>Faith (the response to revelation) now becomes not only response to, and trust in, God, as Subject, but also includes response (existential response, not intellectual assent) to, and trust in, His saving truth. This is the truth expressed by those who describe faith as trust in His promises. "Apart from promise, as Luther said unweariedly, faith does not exist!" (Lindsay, History of the Reformation, Vol. I, p.460.)

<sup>82</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p.118-136, esp. 118, 130.

<sup>83</sup>Robinson, Notes on A Discussion of the Topic of Revelation. This is also the view adopted by Barth (cf. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.290, Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.113), and in the new book by J.K.S. Reid, The Authority of Scripture, London, Methuen, 1957.

only which points toward it. This inadequate definition of the function of Scripture is owing to the fact that the understanding of revelation as wholly a disclosure of a Subject left no room for "truth" in the actual content of revelation, and because in the wake of the discrediting of the old understanding of the Bible as infallible Ritschl and his followers had emphasized its function as a record of the events through which revelation came. Inevitably its inadequacy has resulted in much confusion among modern theologians in trying to explain what is meant by the inspiration of the Bible.<sup>84, 85</sup>

Not that we would deny the valuable insight of modern theology that revelation does come primarily through events, i.e. through "the coincidence of event and interpretation."<sup>86</sup> This insight supports our understanding of the content of revelation, for we may well ask, if the prophetic interpretation of events does not give us truth what does it give us?<sup>87</sup>!

We may thus define the content of revelation as existentially received truth, which God addresses to us personally, thereby Himself confronting us as Subject. In the light of the insights we have now gained we are able to proceed to an examination of the different answers that have been given to the problem of authority and to come to our own conclusion.

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<sup>84</sup>See Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p. 105f.

<sup>85</sup>See further the Conclusion on the doctrine of Scripture.

<sup>86</sup>Temple, quoted Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.65. Cf. also Richardson, op. cit., p.145ff., ed. Richardson and Schweitzer, Biblical Authority for Today, p.159, Dodd, History and the Gospel.

<sup>87</sup>On the other hand we would criticize Baillie's attempt to limit the medium of all revelation to the category of the historical (Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.62, 78f.). When he tries to make revelation through nature revelation through history by describing it as taking place through "point events," and says, "All actual experience of natural objects is part of human history," this is playing with the meaning of words. Revelation through nature takes place in the context of time because all human experience is in the context of time, but that does not make it history. (See Tillich on the mediums of revelation, Systematic Theology I, p.131-139.)

## CHAPTER I

### AUTHORITY IN THE AGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1

#### THE INNER LIGHT

In any study of revelation in the Old Testament by far the most important and complex factor is prophecy. Thus our chief concern in this chapter will be with the attitude of the prophets towards the problem of authority.

The Hebrew prophets, especially such men as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, or Jeremiah, can never adequately be explained merely in terms of antecedents to, and contemporary influences upon, prophecy; but in seeking to understand the phenomenon of prophecy it is essential to study these antecedents and influences. It seems that even in such far-off times as those which preceded the birth of the Yahweh-worshipping nation under Moses the nomadic Hebrew tribes had inspired men who made known to them the divine will. Later we find the terms 'ro'eh,' 'chozeh,' and 'qosem' used to denote the seers and professional diviners in Israel. What was revealed to the original 'ro'eh,' or seer, was typically "an uncanny intuitive knowledge especially related to prediction," arrived at by the interpretation of signs and omens, or by dreams and second-sight. The dreams could be the medium for either auditions or visions. The seer is typified in the Bible in the story of Samuel, the 'ro'eh' whom we read to have been consulted on such a prosaic bit of business as the loss of some asses.

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<sup>1</sup>This name is somewhat inadequate, especially for the experience of the Hebrew prophets. But there is not a more suitable one. We shall use it to denote that which is experienced in immediate revelation. It includes, but is more than, what is commonly called "the witness of the Spirit": the "witness of the Spirit" is more an attestation, the "inner light" more a source, of religious truth.

<sup>2</sup>Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness, p.23, 37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.42.

<sup>4</sup>Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, p.45.

<sup>5</sup>I Sam.3:10ff.; 9:16ff.; 10:25-27.

<sup>6</sup>Dt.13:1.

<sup>7</sup>I Sam.9. But Samuel is an example of seership in its later stages. Notice the close parallel between his call and the special experience of the canonical prophet in I Sam.3. Cf. Knight, op.cit., p.42f.

All the surrounding peoples of the Hebrews in Palestine, the Edomites, Arameans, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Babylonians, had their men of god called seers, diviners, prophets, etc. Knight, following Hölscher, holds that it was from the Canaanite culture around them that the element of ecstatic prophecy was introduced into the religion of the Hebrews. The verbal form of the word 'nabhi' (prophet) originally meant to be in a raving state; and the characteristic feature of the roving bands of prophets was the ecstatic trances in which they indulged, trances which might be deliberately induced by fasting, music, or the use of intoxicants, and which issued in spirit-possessed utterances.

According to Knight, in Elijah and Elisha we see the association of, on the one hand the primitive traditions of magic, divination, and second-sight, and on the other hand the psychic phenomena of ecstasy. But there was a third element which contributed to the making of the great prophets. This reaches back to Moses himself who laid the foundation of the historically-conditioned religion of the Hebrews when he led them through the Exodus to the Sinai covenant, and with whom their worship of Yahveh as a God of uniquely distinctive character and power began. Moses was remembered as the prophet with whom God spoke "mouth to mouth" and not in the "dark speech" of a vision. He was the bearer of the revelation of the covenant relationship. Most scholars agree that at least the Decalogue has its origin in the revelation which came through him. This formulation of religious obligations so fundamentally in terms of ethics became basic to the later development of the Hebrew religion in the great prophets. Like the great prophets,

<sup>8</sup>The Ras Shamra Tablets, the diary of the Egyptian traveller, Wen Amon, and the stories of the prophets of Baal (e.g., I Kings 18) record examples of these prophets.

<sup>9</sup>Knight, *op. cit.*, p.35. Cf. p.25-30. Knight (*ibid.* p.37ff.), but not Scott, maintains that the typical seer, in contrast to the bands of prophets, did not resort to ecstatic trance.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>11</sup>Cf., e.g., I Sam.10:5-12; 19:23f.

<sup>12</sup>I Sam.10:5; II Ki.3:15; I Ki.19:5ff.

<sup>13</sup>Knight, *op. cit.*, p.48.

<sup>14</sup>e.g., II Ki.6:5-7.

<sup>15</sup>II Ki.6:15ff.

<sup>16</sup>Hos. 12:13.

<sup>17</sup>Ju. 12:6-8.

Moses experienced revelation on the plane of history, and tradition records<sup>18</sup> that, as with them, God spoke to him in vision.

These three elements or modes of "revelation,"<sup>19</sup> then were combined in the great prophets.<sup>20</sup> Not that classical prophecy can be reduced to these three terms. It both superseded and completely transcended them - so much so that the great prophets expressly repudiated the forms<sup>21</sup> of them which remained to their day. They did not satisfy the inquisitiveness of the people as the seers endeavoured to do, but proclaimed the will of God, at His bidding and command. The word they proclaimed was powerful not because it had the magical power of compelling God, like<sup>22</sup> Balaam's curse, but because it had its origin in Him.

One by one the concomitants of the older and lower stages fall away. Ephod and teraphim<sup>23</sup> are consigned to the owls and the bats.... Every kind of physical stimulus is discarded.... The revelation comes to him whether he will or no.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless the great prophets still claimed to receive revelation through<sup>25</sup> the traditional ecstatic trance. Through personal experience, as in the tragedy of Hosea's life, through the silence of nature, as to Elijah and Amos, and in visions and auditions God spoke to them. So real were the visions that they did not distinguish between external and internal<sup>26</sup> seeing; and so real were the words they heard that they sometimes speak of the auditions as visions, as though they were perceived with the actuality and certainty of the experience of sight.

<sup>18</sup>Ex.3 etc.

<sup>19</sup>The three classes are not absolutely clearcut, for, as Rowley warns us, we must beware of making hard and fast and too-neat divisions between the seer and the prophet for instance (Rowley, The Rediscovery of the Old Testament p.97).

<sup>20</sup>Cf., e.g. I Sam.9:9.

<sup>21</sup>Dt.18:10-12,18; Am.7:14; Jer.14:14 etc.

<sup>22</sup>Nu.22:6. Cf. Jer.1:9-10; Hos.6:5.

<sup>23</sup>Instruments of divination.

<sup>24</sup>Sanday, Inspiration, p.148

<sup>25</sup>Cf. the traditional technical description, "The hand of the Lord fell upon me" (Is.8:11; Jer.15:17; Ezk.1:3, 8:1-3 etc.).

<sup>26</sup>See Knight, op. cit., p.56.

In all these they were aware of God Himself addressing them personally and immediately with His Word, not in mysterious garbled sounds to be subsequently interpreted, but "in a direct contact as of mind with mind assuming the form of intelligible speech."<sup>27</sup>

It was a new kind of ecstasy that the great prophets experienced, one more "related to the concentration and absorption of the mystic,"<sup>28</sup> one that completely transcended and superseded the experience of the old 'n bhi'im,' but so far from the prophets denying that this was the result of spirit-possession,<sup>29</sup> they claimed that it was the effect of the Spirit of God, invading the personality and guiding and controlling the mind. In fact being possessed by the Spirit of God was equated with the experience of the actual presence of God addressing them with His Word.<sup>30</sup> This was so much a possession, so real an experience of being addressed, that they felt sometimes that they were repeating the actual words of Yahweh,<sup>31</sup> sometimes that He was actually using their mouths and tongues to speak.<sup>32</sup> This did not mean that the prophet's personality was rendered completely passive, for as Davidson points out, we must not forget that such activities as seeing and hearing are forms of thinking, activities of the mind itself.<sup>33</sup> As Knight defines it, "prophetic inspiration means, not the absorption or dissolution of the prophet's personality, but its unification and enhancement in an intense act of exalted imaginative perception or vision."<sup>34</sup> Thus, though they were possessed by, rather than possessed, the Word, yet there was no Word of God which was not also the word of man in so far as it was "refracted through a human medium."<sup>35</sup> Inevitably their "formulation" of the divine Word was distorted to a certain extent.

<sup>27</sup>Scott, op. cit., p.86.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.87.

<sup>29</sup>Scott denies this, opposing the being possessed by the Word of the great prophets to the being possessed by a spirit, even the "spirit of God," of the lesser prophets. But cf. Knight, op. cit., p. 64f., 75-78, Rowley, The Rediscovery of the Old Testament, p.99.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. the parallelism in Ps.51:11.

<sup>31</sup>Jer.3:11f.

<sup>32</sup>Is.6:7; Jer.2:9; Dt.18:18; Nu.12:8.

<sup>33</sup>Davidson, "Prophecy and the Prophets," H.D.B., Vol.IV, p.115.

<sup>34</sup>Knight, op. cit., p.95.

<sup>35</sup>See the Introduction.

"The prophets were as convinced of the authority of their utterances as they were of their own existence."<sup>36</sup> Yet they denounced other prophets as "false prophets." How was this? Scott suggests that they applied three tests by which they established the authority of the Word they received: (i) the psychological, which included the nature of the insight as a sudden dawning, the compulsion to speak it, and the exalted words in which they uttered it; (ii) the rational, which was the test of consistency with the prophet's original call and with the Word of previous prophets; (iii) the moral, which was its relevance to the moral confusion of the situation.<sup>37</sup> Knight suggests another test we might call the spiritual which included the reality of the spiritual communion which underlay it and the spiritual fruits it produced. But surely the whole point is that the prophets did not need to vindicate the authority of the Word to themselves. They did not need to apply any "tests"! The Word seized them, came compelling them to utter it by its own authority - even in spite of their own most agonizing protestations.<sup>38</sup> Or, we might say, the Spirit of God, in His possession of them, compelled them to utter it by His authority. The Word was authoritative because God had spoken it. "The ultimate ground of the prophetic consciousness is an immediate and experimental knowledge of God,"<sup>39</sup> and the Word bore authority because they had heard God addressing it to them. This was not something that could be "tested"!! This was the test by which all things were tested!! If they had been asked what gave the Word they spoke authority they would have replied the fact that it was what it was, viz., the Word of God. If in their own hearts they questioned it, it was to God Himself that they appealed to judge and show them what was truth, that they might hear His

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<sup>36</sup> Sanday, op. cit., p.264.

<sup>37</sup> Scott, op. cit., p.94ff.

<sup>38</sup> Am.7:2,5; Jer.4:19; 12:1ff.20:7ff.; Hab.1:4,13f.

<sup>39</sup> Knight, op. cit., p.102.

Word again. <sup>40</sup> "Each individual prophet sought his own inspiration not in the link with tradition, but in an immediate contact with God," <sup>41</sup> for God alone was the source and authority of what they proclaimed. "This <sup>42</sup> was precisely what distinguished true prophecy from aberrant forms." <sup>43</sup> There were no Scriptures to appeal to: they were not "like the scribes." Nor did they appeal to the powers of reason: "they do not reason but command." <sup>44</sup> For the message they proclaimed was a divine command and was therefore its own authority. <sup>45</sup>

How then did they expect their hearers to recognize its authority? In the same way as they did. Not only did the Spirit of God speak to the prophets, it was also He who spoke through them to their hearers. The Word carried its own intrinsic authority. "The authority of the prophetic utterances...cannot be established...by anything external to itself." <sup>46</sup> Those who had ears to hear would hear, <sup>47</sup> i.e., those who received it existentially would hear God personally addressing it to them, and would thus know that its truth carried His authority. The Spirit alone could convince them of it, the Spirit of God. <sup>48</sup>

#### THE ATTESTATION OF 'DUNAMIS' <sup>49</sup>

Sometimes a religious message is claimed to be attested as true by 'power'-ful signs which accompany it. The old "argument from prophecy" <sup>50</sup> adopted this approach in the stress it laid on the literal, detailed fulfilment of the element of prediction in prophecy as a proof

<sup>40</sup> Jer.20:7; 28:1-16.

<sup>41</sup> Edmond Jacob in ed. Jean Boisset, Le Problème Biblique dans le Protestantisme, p.72 (Dr. Cosser's translation).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Mk.1:22.

<sup>44</sup> Sanday, op. cit., p.145.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Is.6:9; Am.7:15f.; Scott, op. cit., p.85f.

<sup>46</sup> Knight, op. cit., p.119.

<sup>47</sup> Is.6:9f. Cf. Mk.4:9 etc.

<sup>48</sup> See further the Conclusion.

<sup>49</sup> I have borrowed this word from the New Testament. The sections on 'dunamis' are different from the others in so far as 'dunamis' is not an authority; but it may attest some authority.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Richardson, Christian Apologetics, ch.8.

of its truth. But modern criticism has shown this to rest on a mistaken assumption about the nature of prophecy.<sup>51</sup> It is true that the prophets proclaimed that their utterances would be vindicated by fulfilment on the plane of history<sup>52</sup> and the Deuteronomic legislators laid down the test of true prophecy as the fulfilment of prediction,<sup>53</sup> but as Davidson points out,<sup>54</sup> this attestation was of little service to the individual, for usually the prophecies bore upon the destiny of the people and, while in the prolonged life of the people the event might ultimately justify the prophet, this<sup>55</sup> was not sufficient for the individual contemporaneous with the prophet. Moreover, sometimes this vindication itself made it too late to take heed<sup>56</sup> of the prophet's word.

Nor did ecstasy serve as a criterion of truth, for both true and false prophet spoke out of ecstasy. It was not the manner in which they delivered their message that differentiated between them, but the matter.<sup>57</sup>

#### TRADITION

Some scholars have too strongly contrasted priest and prophet<sup>58</sup> in the Old Testament. But this is mistaken. Samuel is depicted as both prophet and priest. The prophets were the mouthpieces of God in times of crisis; the priests were the preservers of the truth revealed through them. New truth is always built upon old truth, and the prophets themselves stood upon the foundation laid by those who had been their forerunners. Sometimes we forget that but for the priestly redactors the prophetic writings of the Old Testament would never have been preserved. Thus the conflict was not as profound as it is sometimes made out to be.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Is. 2:6; Dt. 8:0-12, 18. See Richardson, *ibid.*, on this.

<sup>52</sup> e.g., Jer. 44:29ff.

<sup>53</sup> Dt. 18:22 cf. Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 85n.

<sup>54</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ezk. 2:5.

<sup>56</sup> I Ki. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Lods, *The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism*, p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Rowley, *The Rediscovery of the Old Testament*, p. 110ff.

Yet, as Scott remarks, "conflict<sup>59</sup> is eventually inevitable between the religious institutions and prophetic spirits who are alive to the demands of religion for a present that is always new."<sup>60</sup> The new truth the prophets proclaimed might become part of the corpus of tradition preserved by the priests eventually, but in the hour that it was proclaimed it was often opposed by them. Sometimes this was because of moral and professional corruption amongst the priesthood, but more especially it was because the traditionalists in a religion always tend to the conservative. With their emphasis on institutionalized tradition the priests easily tended to deny authoritative revelation to those who stood outside of their own succession and did not depend on the historical institutions for which they stood for their call or the authority of their message but on direct revelation from God. The priests thus were inclined to assign ultimate authority in revelation to the institutions for which they stood, such as the priesthood, or to the past word of the prophets which they elaborated into a "tradition"<sup>61</sup> to meet the needs of their own time. Both of these were "formulated" categories of revelation, which in themselves could not<sup>62</sup> be the living Word of God.

#### THE SCRIPTURES

With the decline of prophecy more and more emphasis came to be laid on the records of what the prophets had spoken. Ezra tried to embody the ideals of the prophets in the Law, hoping that they might thereby achieve more than they had hitherto done. Even this action of his had its original impulse in a prophet, viz., Ezekiel, and Ezra did not think of his religion as in any way the antithesis of the prophets'. "For the

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<sup>59</sup>I.e., conflict concerning the final authority in revelation.

<sup>60</sup>Scott, *op. cit.*, p.208 cf. 13, 15.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. the next chapter.

<sup>62</sup>According to Gruden's Complete Concordance, "the Jews called their traditions the Oral Law, pretending that God delivered them to Moses by word of mouth upon Mount Sinai, at the same time that he gave him the written law: That the lawgiver taught them to the elders of the people...as a trust, which they were to convey down to their successors, and so on."

priestly Law was not intended to be the substitute for faith, but its organ."<sup>63</sup>  
 Thus there came into being the first canon of the Scriptures, and it was  
 this canon par excellence<sup>64</sup> that came to be the authoritative criterion by  
 which all future additions to the Old Testament were judged.

But with the emphasis that gradually came to be placed on the  
 writings as against the living voice there came to be such a stress on  
 tradition and on the legal fulfilment of the will of God that no room  
 was left for the spirit of prophecy, except in so far as it expressed  
 itself in apocalyptic and psalmody.<sup>65</sup> Later Judaism began to make the  
 legal code, the doctrine, the written word out of which the doctrine was  
 formulated, the final authority in the sphere of revelation. It laid so  
 much emphasis on the receptacles in which the content of revelation was med-  
 iated, i.e., the "formulated" Word, that it forgot that it had been given in  
 different circumstances and for different needs to its own and so cramped  
 and distorted the revelation. Thus the religious and moral demands of  
 God were reduced to the merely legal response to a code, "the Law" became  
 a protective covering, and the burning faith and hope of the prophets were  
 reduced to a doctrinal and metaphysical shape.<sup>66</sup> It was already the  
 danger of this, the danger of substituting forms for the living spirit  
 by conforming all, even king and prophet, to the Book,<sup>67</sup> that had caused  
 Jeremiah, the prophet of the covenant of the heart, not to commend the  
 Deuteronomic book in his own time, according to Jacob.<sup>68</sup>

The theory of inspiration as a mechanical dictation, which  
 Judaism began to adopt, partly due to the influence of Alexandrian  
 Judaism<sup>69</sup> which borrowed from the Greek concept of inspiration, helped  
 determine its concept of Scripture. The extent to which the Word and the

<sup>63</sup>Rowley, op. cit., p.117.

<sup>64</sup>As it has remained for the Jews until today. Cf. Edmond Jacob, essay  
 on "The Canonical Authority of the Old Testament," ed. J. Boisset,  
Le Problème Biblique dans le Protestantisme, p.74.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Scott, op. cit., p.59.

<sup>66</sup>Lods, op. cit., p.321.

<sup>67</sup>Dt.17:18.

<sup>68</sup>E. Jacob, op. cit., p.73f. Cf. Jer.8:8.

<sup>69</sup>Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.203f.

"formulated" Word (and thus the authority of each) came to be identified can be seen in the statement of the Talmud,

Even were one to say the whole Torah is from heaven, and were to assert only of one verse, that the Holy One did not say it, but Moses, as seemed good to him, of him it must be said that he has despised the Word of the Eternal.<sup>70</sup>

Thus the written word, as the final authority, became invested with infallibility, eventually down to its least little jot or tittle, and came to be regarded as itself the very utterance of God to be bowed down before by scribe and interpreter.

But this idea of infallibility due to 'dictation' inspiration was not the Old Testament writers own conception of their experience. The frequent references to sources in the historical books, for instance, deny the miraculous dictation of historical facts independent of the ordinary human, and therefore fallible, processes of historical tradition. Moreover the result of this confusion of the Word with the "formulated" Word is shown in that when He came, who was the true Origin of the Word that had been spoken through the prophets, there was no room left for the recognition of the living authority with which He spoke. The worship of the "formulated" Word had blinded their eyes to the authority of the living Word in Jesus Christ.

#### REASON

Beside the distinctive types of prophet and priest in the Old Testament there was a third, the "wise men" of Israel. They represented the reflective element, and it was in them par excellence that tradition was challenged by, and revelation subjected to, the scrutiny of reason. The author of the Book of Job, for instance, challenged the traditional attitude towards suffering, and came, not so much to another

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<sup>70</sup>Quoted Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.118n.

or profounder answer, as to a humility before the knowledge that man could not know the final answer.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the author of Ecclesiastes showed the inadequacies of the glib answers that prevailed in popular religion. Thus we see that God used reason not so much as an instrument or source of revelation but as a means to clarify and purify from false accretions the revelation already given when it spoke from the existential viewpoint of faith.

Later we find a party in Israel which exalted reason to a more authoritative position. This was the Sadducees, a rationalistic element in later Judaism, which not only refused to acknowledge the binding force of the oral tradition to which the Pharisees attached the highest importance, but also, because they spoke from the existential viewpoint of a "general indifference to religion,"<sup>72</sup> did not hesitate to question elements of the actual revelation.<sup>73</sup>

Thus we see that the problem of authority in revelation exhibited its many aspects already in the Old Testament. Already there were the George Foxes (the prophets), the traditionalists (the priests), the biblicists or fundamentalists (the scribes and exegetes of Judaism), the rationalists or 'modernists' (the Sadducees); and our study of these therefore contributes towards a deeper understanding of the problem as we face it today.

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<sup>71</sup>Rowley, op. cit.,

<sup>72</sup>D. Eaton, "Sadducees," F.D.B., Vol.IV, p.351a. See passim.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. Ac.23:8.

## CHAPTER II

### AUTHORITY IN THE AGE OF THE INCARNATION

#### THE INNER LIGHT

Jesus has been called the Prophet. Many of the characteristic features of the prophets were exhibited in Him. The doctrine of the 'kenosis' is a difficult problem in theology, but it is apparent from the Gospels that Jesus experienced something at a certain point in His life which was akin to the prophets' experience of their call. Like them He felt Himself taken possession<sup>1</sup> of by the Spirit suddenly - at His baptism. It was then, and then only, that He began to preach the Word that was given Him (and to perform His miracles). Or rather, it was after the forty days when He was "driven" by the Spirit to live in the wilderness, a time spent in communing<sup>2</sup> with Him, and in receiving the message which He was to preach as they had received their messages. Moreover, as the prophets had used the term, "the hand of the Lord," to denote the ecstatic possession by the Spirit which they experienced, so Jesus used the term, "the finger of God,"<sup>3</sup> to denote the Spirit by whom He cast out demons.<sup>4</sup> James Denney has shown that, like the prophets, He too experienced ecstatic states.

Thus, like the prophets, Jesus claimed a direct communication with God. The Word He proclaimed was God's Word, and in proclaiming it He claimed for it the authority<sup>5</sup> of God. He Himself did not need to "test" it: nor did He appeal to any external authority for the distinctive message He proclaimed. It was its own authority.

The difference between Jesus and the prophets was that He laid the emphasis not on the Spirit's working and speaking through Him so much

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<sup>1</sup>"The Spirit...drove Him out into the wilderness" (Mk.1:12).

<sup>2</sup>See C.K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, London, S.F.C.K., 1947. This had also a specific Messianic significance. Cf. Ex.8:19; 31:18. (Note also our Lord's use of fingers in healing).

<sup>3</sup>Lk.11:20 cf. Mt.12:28.

<sup>4</sup>J. Denney, "The Holy Spirit," ed. Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1908, Vol.1.

<sup>5</sup>Jn.14:10; 7:17, R.S.V.

as His working and speaking "by (means of) the Spirit."<sup>6</sup> The Johannine discourses<sup>7</sup> give us a picture of one who regarded His own authority as greater than that of the Spirit Himself. It was on His own authority that He even forgave sins.<sup>8</sup> Thus, though, as we have seen, He referred to God's authority as greater than His own,<sup>9</sup> yet at the same time He identified His authority with the authority of God. He thus spoke with an authority that no one ever had had before.<sup>10</sup> And because He Himself was "the Authority over all authorities,"<sup>11</sup> and was Himself present as a man to whom His disciples could appeal in religious disputes, the problem of authority was of a fundamentally unique nature during His incarnation. Here was the Authority in the midst of men, to whom they could appeal directly and in the flesh, a state of affairs different from that of our own day, as we are faced by the problem of authority. From this fact we may advance to one of two arguments: (1) as the problem of authority was resolved by His presence in the flesh, so His absence means that there is no authority final, or completely final, "in the Flesh;" (2) because of the threat of this possibility He must have delegated His authority to some organ "in the flesh" (whether Pope or Church or Bible or succession of prophets or anything else, however we formulate it).

But can any delegated authority ever have the same authority as the Authority over all authorities Himself? Here it is important to notice the attitude of Jesus to the "authorities" of His own day, such as the Church of Judaism, the Old Testament and its exegetes, the scribes, the "tradition of the elders," etc. (See the following sections). on the other hand we must remember that the revelation He brought was something essentially new and therefore inevitably to a certain extent foreign to them.

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<sup>6</sup>Mt.12:28

<sup>7</sup>Jn.14; 16.

<sup>8</sup>Mk.2:1ff.

<sup>9</sup>Jn. 7:17, R.S.V.; 14:10

<sup>10</sup>Mt.7:29.

<sup>11</sup>Col.2:10 (Phillips' translation).

Once again, like the prophets, Jesus expected His hearers to recognize His authority just because it was the authority of God. The Word He proclaimed carried its own authority. "If any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God."<sup>12</sup>

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT

There seem to have been two sides in tension with each other in Jesus' attitude to Scripture. On the one side He appears to have approached,<sup>13</sup> or perhaps assumed, Judaism's understanding of it as infallible in authority. It has been argued that those who recorded His words (who definitely did share the current view) were unconsciously responsible for this. But, according to Dr. Sanday, even "when deductions have been made...on critical grounds, there still remains evidence enough that our Lord while upon earth did use the common language of His contemporaries in regard to the Old Testament."<sup>14</sup> His "It is written..." in such passages as Mt.4:4,7,10, Mt.26:31 and Mk. 14:27 seems to have implied the infallible authority of the Scriptures. In Jn.10:34f. He applies to an incidental clause in the Psalms the saying that "the Scriptures cannot be broken." He maintains that everything written in Scripture "must needs be fulfilled,"<sup>15</sup> and we are even shown the risen Lord pointing out the fulfilment of a detailed forecast of His earthly career "in all the Scriptures."<sup>16</sup> "Truly I say to you," He proclaims, "till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the law until all is accomplished."<sup>17, 18</sup> If all this shows that Jesus did sometimes

<sup>12</sup> Jn.7:17, R.S.V.

<sup>13</sup> See Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p.138-144, Rimmer, Internal Evidence of Inspiration.

<sup>14</sup> Sanday, Inspiration, p.414.

<sup>15</sup> Mt.26:54; Lk.18:31; 21:22; 22:37; Jn.15:25 etc.

<sup>16</sup> Lk.24:44ff.

<sup>17</sup> Mt.5:18, R.S.V.

<sup>18</sup> Warfield also argues from His ascription in Mt.19:5 of words in Gen.2:24 to the actual utterance of God which in the original text are not spoken by Him that He took the whole text of the Old Testament, or at least of the Pentateuch, to be a direct, infallible utterance of God. (Warfield, op. cit., p.143). But in the more original Markan equivalent (Mk.10:5-9) the quotation is not explicitly assigned to the utterance of God. Moreover even if Jesus did quote it as in Matthew He was probably quoting from a collection of Old Testament excerpts (complete texts of the Old Testaments were very uncommon) in which this may have been grouped with reported utterances of God from the Law.

treat the Old Testament as a collection of 'infallibly' authoritative proof-texts this may be explained in terms of the 'kenosis,' in so far as Jesus was not necessarily incapable of epistemological error.

The other side of Jesus' attitude to Scripture was revolutionary. As Millar Burrows points out somewhere it was an essentially radical interpretation to make everything in the Law "hang" on Dt.6:5 and Lev.19:18. We may compare Luther's later criterion of 'justification by faith.' Jesus distinguished between more authoritative and less authoritative elements, rating the ceremonial law low and ethical law high and not hesitating to quote Scripture against Scripture. In Mk.7:14-23, for instance, He sweeps away a whole class of legal injunctions, "making all meats clean," and in Mk. 2:25-26 He cites a passage out of "the Prophets" against the Law. He went even further, recognizing that some ethical principles in the written law had been outgrown. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time... but I say unto you...," He proclaimed. In all this as Sanday has argued, Jesus was taking principles inherent in the Law, <sup>as a whole</sup> to their logical, but until then only implicit, conclusions, overcoming the letter by the spirit. And it may be argued, especially in view of Mk.7:14-23 etc., that in Mt.5:18 by the dot and the iota He was indicating metaphorically the permanence of the "spirit" of the Law in every even apparently unimportant implication, rather than literally meaning the letters in which it was written. But the remarkable point here is how this contrasts with a doctrine of the equal authority of every part and word of Scripture.

Finally, it is most important to note Jesus' conception of the relation of the authority of the Old Testament to His own. From the instances cited in the last paragraph one thing that does stand out is that

<sup>19</sup>See further Chapter VII, section 'Fundamentalism.'

<sup>20</sup>Mt.22:40.

<sup>21</sup>See Chapter VI.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, Lecture 3, section V.

<sup>23</sup>Compare Mk.7:14-23 and Lev.11, Dt.14.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Mk.2:25-26 and Lev.24:9, I Sam.21:1-6. See also Mt.9:13, 12:7 (Hos.6:6).

<sup>25</sup>Mt.5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43.

<sup>26</sup>Sanday, op. cit., p.410-414, 410n.

Jesus subjected the authority of the Old Testament to His own in a fundamental way, and to the Word which He proclaimed.

#### TRADITION

The word "tradition" ('paradosis') means, etymologically, "handing over." The conception of tradition, therefore, implies (a) a 'deposit' which is handed over, and (b) 'depositories,' i.e., persons in possession of the deposit who are commissioned to preserve it and transmit it to successors.<sup>26</sup> Most religious systems claim to bear within themselves a revealed deposit, consisting of some or all of the elements of ceremonial, myth, dogma, and ethic.

What was Jesus' attitude to the Jewish tradition that prevailed at His time? In some places He vehemently rejects "the tradition of the elders" as something "of men," as in the saying about the Corban and in His attitude to the traditions concerning the Sabbath.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere he supports<sup>28</sup> it though severely judging the moral shortcomings of its depositories. The point was that He definitely subordinated it to the judgment and so to the authority of "the Word of God"<sup>29</sup> received through Scripture by the individual moral conscience, and, above all, to His own authority.<sup>30</sup>

Did Jesus intend to found a Christian tradition, a new 'paradosis' to supersede the revelation? Further, did He institute a class of depositories empowered to decide its true contents in disputes? These are questions about which more controversy has raged. But in the last few decades, especially with the discrediting of Liberal theology, scholars have

<sup>26</sup>Williams, "Tradition," E.R.E., Vol.XII, p.411a.

<sup>27</sup>Mk.7:9-23; Mt.15:1-20; Mk.2:23-28; cf. Mk.2:18-22.

<sup>28</sup>Mt.23:2f.,23. Matthew is the most Judaistic of the evangelists, but he includes the saying about Corban. Cullmann's judgment that Jesus rejected the 'paradosis' of the Jews completely (Cullmann, The Early Church, p.60,63) is much too radical. Cf. Williams, op. cit., p.411b. In criticism of Cullmann we would also say that Jesus did not intend to replace the 'tradition' of the Jews (p. 69), so much as fulfil, and therefore transcend and supersede, the whole of the Old Testament revelation. The paradox he finds in Jesus' attitude on the one hand to the 'paradosis' of the Jews and on the other hand to His own 'paradosis' is therefore a false one. It was not a new interpretation of the Old Testament that He wanted to give (p.66) but a new revelation, a new testament.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Mk.7:13.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Mk.2:28.

drawn closer together on this point. Protestant thinking has become more inclined to agree that Jesus did intend to found a new community.<sup>31</sup> It has been shown that Jesus' original sayings were often in rhythmical or alliterative form, and that He probably not only repeated them Himself, but caused His disciples to repeat them, that they might be remembered - after the manner of other Rabbis.<sup>32</sup> And Formgeschichte has stressed anew the existence and role of the oral tradition before the Gospels were committed to writing.<sup>33</sup> Yet it is not evident from the Gospels just what part He intended tradition to play. This question is more decisively answered later, in the attitude of the apostles and those who followed them to the 'paradosis' and to its commission to writing in the form of the New Testament.<sup>34</sup> The question of what role He intended the authoritative teaching-office committed to His disciples (as the 'depositories' of His 'paradosis') to play after His death, we turn to examine now.

#### THE CHURCH

The attitude between Jesus and the formal Jewish Church of His own time, at least so far as it was represented in the hierarchy of the priesthood, was one of hostility. He never appealed to the authority of the Church. And we must not forget that it was the Church that secured His crucifixion because He dared to exalt His own authority against it, an authority of the Spirit against an institutional authority. He had not even been born a Levite in order that He might become a priest and so at least stand in the formal line of the authority of the Church in His teaching.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of this, however, it is contended that in founding the New Testament 'ecclesia' Jesus meant to found an organized hierarchy, a permanent institution, through which He meant His own teaching-office

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<sup>31</sup>Cf., e.g., Flew, Jesus and His Church, Cullmann, The Early Church.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Jn.14:26.

<sup>33</sup>See Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition.

<sup>34</sup>See the following two chapters.

<sup>35</sup>However there are excellent grounds for believing that He was a trained and accepted rabbi: even His enemies formally addressed Him as such.

to be handed on from age to age, with His own authority inherent in it. On the other hand it has been argued that Jesus did not contemplate the Church in any way whatsoever; but scholars do not generally hold to this today. Jesus must have contemplated a Christian community, but the elements of form and organization were at a minimum in His teaching.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as we shall see in the next chapter, the New Testament evidence seems to indicate that there was no single form of church government in the apostolic age, and it is safe to conclude from this that Jesus Himself did not provide any church order. If He had done so, appeal would surely have been made to His ruling order to combat the diversity which existed.

It is maintained, however, that various passages in the New Testament show that Jesus did establish the Church as an organization and institution with a definite form of its own, and chiefly the following:-  
Mt.18:18: When Jesus addresses the disciples and says to them, "I solemnly tell you that whatever you as a Church bind on earth will in Heaven be held as bound, and whatever you loose on earth will in Heaven be held to be loosed,<sup>37</sup> was he not committing power to the potential hierarchy or "ecumenical councils" of the Church? But quite apart from the evidence advanced against the genuineness of this saying, the term "Church" here is used in a different, narrower sense than in 16:18, and here denotes the "local congregation".<sup>38</sup> In other words, it is to the corporate congregation<sup>39</sup> that the power of general judgement is committed, and this only in so far as "banning" or "acquitting" a fellow member of the congregation was concerned. (Even if this passage is interpreted to mean a giving of power to the Apostles as such it cannot be argued that "successors" are involved in view of the nature of the apostolic office.)<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>See concerning Mt.28:18-20 below;

<sup>37</sup>Weymouth's translation. The phrase "as a Church" is "understood, but not expressed in the Greek" (Weymouth, footnote ad. loc.) See the context, Mt. 18:15-20). For the meaning of "bind" and "loose" see below on 'Peter, the Rock.'

<sup>38</sup>Weymouth, footnote ad. loc., S.E. Johnson, The Interpreter's Bible, Nashville, Abingdon, Vol.7, p.473.

<sup>39</sup>Cf. the following two verses, 18:19-20.

<sup>40</sup>See below.

Jn.15:13 and 16: Thornton, for instance, has contended that the use of the same verb for "lay down" and "appoint" indicates that the appointment of an institutionalized hierarchy was integral to the sacrifice of the Cross.

But, as T.W. Manson has said, only by resort to "haggadic" exegesis could we come to such a conclusion.<sup>41</sup>

Jn.16:13 and 14:26: Apart from the question whether this applied only to the apostles or not, which the text does not decide for us, this would seem to apply to those "who base their lives upon the Gospel, and who enjoy living communion with the Church's Head" rather than the hierarchy of "apostolic succession."<sup>42</sup>

Mt.28:18-20: The sacraments, it is held, imply an organized Church. But can we really conceive that either here or on the solemn occasion of the Lord's Supper Jesus' mind was concerned with considerations of right order, valid administrations, and the like? When Jesus said to His disciples, "Go ye and teach all nations....," He did not mean to convey that they rather than anyone else should perform this task. There were no others to do it anyway. The point was rather that there was a task to be done, that this was not a place for standing and gazing up to heaven, and that they must therefore go and do it to the utmost of their strength but also strengthened by the knowledge that He would always help them in the gigantic task.<sup>43</sup>

A further set of passages is concerned with the unique position Peter as leader of the apostles, to which we now turn in a separate section .

#### PETER, THE ROCK

The question is whether Jesus, by commissioning Peter as leader of the apostles, did not create the institution of the papacy, and thereby the keystone of the organized hierarchy.

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<sup>41</sup>T.W. Manson, The Church's Ministry, cited by Robinson, Notes on Peter the Rock.

<sup>42</sup>Paterson, The Rule of Faith, p.41.

<sup>43</sup>N.H.G. Robinson, Notes on Peter, the Rock.

Lk.22:31-32: Toner contends that this gave "to St. Peter and his successors the office...of authoritatively confirming the...bishops and believers generally."<sup>44</sup> But the command to strengthen his brethren, though it conferred a special distinction upon Peter, was essentially connected with the prediction of the denial, and therefore with the historical Peter only.<sup>45</sup>

Mk.16:7: This, says Knox, shows that our Lord distinguished Peter as holding a "unique position."<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, Vincent Taylor contends, "There can be little doubt that the Denial is in mind."<sup>47</sup> But even if we take it to indicate the unique and pre-eminent position of Peter, which is already indicated in many other passages,<sup>48</sup> the passage in no wise indicates that successors or any concept of a papacy as a permanent institution is involved.

Jn.21:15-17: Toner interprets this to mean that "the complete and supreme pastoral charge of the whole of Christ's flock - sheep as well as lambs - is given to St. Peter and his successors, and in this is undoubtedly comprised supreme doctrinal authority."<sup>49</sup> This is a commission, but we cannot say that it involves more than the historical Peter, for "the threefold assertion of love for his Lord and the threefold commission undoubtedly stand in intentional contrast to the threefold denial."<sup>50</sup> The question of what the commission did involve we shall see in the section dealing with Peter in the next chapter.

I Cor.15:5: The claim to apostleship rested on two things: a commission from Christ and having seen the risen Lord. By appearing to Peter first "the risen Christ thereby put the seal, so to speak, upon the distinction which during his lifetime he had given Peter by naming him Cephas."<sup>51</sup> "Later eastern sources also tell of an appearance of Christ connected with

<sup>44</sup>Toner, "Infallibility," Catholic Encyclopaedia, p.797a.

<sup>45</sup>Cullmann, Peter, Disciple - Apostle - Martyr, p.26, 210.

<sup>46</sup>Knox, The Belief of Catholics, p.131.

<sup>47</sup>Vincent Taylor, The Gospel according to St. Mark, London, Macmillan, 1952, p.607b.

<sup>48</sup>Mk.1:36; Lk.9:32; 8:45; and the passages discussed in these pages. Cf. Cullmann, op. cit., p.24f.

<sup>49</sup>Toner, op. cit., p.797a.

<sup>50</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.60.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.59. Cf. with I Cor.15:5; Mk.16:7; Lk.24:34.

a special commission,"<sup>52</sup> Again, however, there is no implication of successors or a papacy.

Mt.16:17-19: This is by far the most important and disputed of the passages. Its genuineness has been questioned on the grounds that Jesus could not have used the word 'ekklesia' ("Church"), as He proclaimed only the coming Kingdom, ('basileia').<sup>53</sup> Cullmann<sup>54</sup> and Flew, however, convincingly refute this argument, although Cullmann doubts that the narrative setting in<sup>55</sup> Matthew was its original context.

"I TELL YOU, YOU ARE PETER ('KEPHA'), AND ON THIS ROCK ('KEPHA') I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH": The naming of Peter, "Rock," is an established<sup>56</sup> fact even apart from the passage, and the fact that the same word, 'kepha,' must have been used in the original Aramaic indicates that Peter himself is the "rock" meant. An "exact parallel" is found in the Rabbinic parable which likens God to a king wishing to build himself a house, finding no sure foundation, and digging deep down till at last He found a rock. "So when God saw Abraham who was to arise (appear), He said: 'Now I have found a rock on which to build and establish the world.' Therefore He called Abraham a rock." "In this passage Peter is to be as it were the forefather of the new Israel, as Abraham was the forefather of the old."<sup>57</sup>

But Abraham was followed by no permanent line of successors! Nor is Mt.16:17-19 speaking about anyone but Peter: "rock" does not include "successors"! (In fact no one reading this whole saying without prejudice could ever by himself get the idea that Jesus is speaking in a sort of prophetic way - to successors of Peter). Jesus is here using a spacial<sup>58</sup> metaphor to describe a time sequence. The first disciples, and especially Peter, were the first stones laid in building the Church. Countless other stones would be laid in subsequent ages, but the apostles were the

<sup>52</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.61. My italics.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p.186ff.

<sup>54</sup>Flew, op. cit., p.17-98.

<sup>55</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.170-184.

<sup>56</sup>Mk.3:16; Jn.1:42 etc. Cf. Jesus naming the sons of Zebedee with the title, "Sons of Thunder."

<sup>57</sup>Flew, op. cit., p.93, Cullmann, op. cit., p.186. Jesus also was called a 'rock' (Ro.9:23; I Pet.2:8; I Cor.10:4, cf. Lk.6:48; 20:17 etc.): this stresses the uniqueness of the office committed to Peter.

<sup>58</sup>Robinson, Notes on Peter, the Rock. Cf. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, p.15ff.

foundation-stones of the Church, because, firstly, they were its first members - and Peter the first of them all. Without the first man (Abraham) who confessed to the true God, the Old Testament Church could not have been started; and in the same way Peter, in his, the first, confession of Jesus as the Christ, was the essential part in the laying of the foundation of the New Testament Church. The work of building the 'ekklesia' might belong to an unlimited future, but Jesus is speaking here of the laying of the foundation of the rock on which it is to be built.

The apostles were the foundation-stones of the Church because, secondly, being its first members, they were also the essential witnesses of the Gospel history which gave rise to it in that it was upon their testimonies that others would have to rely. Thus in Jn.17:20 Christ speaks of the coming generations "who are to believe," not through the words of the successors to the apostles, but "through their word." The apostolic office, particularly that of the Twelve, is a unique office not to be repeated, which depended on unique conditions themselves not repeatable, viz, having witnessed the Resurrection, and having received a direct commission from the Risen One. Precisely on the basis of this apostolic concept, Peter is the primary apostle, as the first to have seen the Risen Lord and the one who received a special apostolic commission. Just as it is impossible to think of successors to the apostles (as apostles), so most of all it is impossible to think of a successor to Peter.<sup>59</sup>

In the entire New Testament the illustration of the foundation, which indeed is identical in meaning with that of the rock, always designates the unique apostolic function, which is chronologically possible only at the beginning of the building; see Ephesians 2:20;<sup>60</sup> Romans 15:20; I I Corinthians 3:10; Galations 2:9; Revelation 21:14,19. In Matthew 16:18 Peter is addressed in his unrepeatable apostolic capacity.<sup>61</sup>

"AND THE GATES OF HADES SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT": Before

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<sup>59</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.215f.

<sup>60</sup>The prophets remained the foundation through their Word: their was no formal "prophetic succession" of office.

<sup>61</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.209.

the attack of the ekklesia, in the power of Christ's victory over death,<sup>62</sup>  
 the previously unconquerable gates of the realm of the dead must open.  
 Alternatively it means that "the powers of death"<sup>63</sup> shall not be able finally  
 to conquer the community whose Lord has overcome them in that victory.

"I WILL GIVE YOU THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN": Mention  
 has just been made of the gates of Hades, the realm of the dead; now the  
 doors of the Kingdom of Heaven, the realm of life in the Resurrection, are  
 in mind.<sup>64</sup> The reference seems to be to Is.22:22, where the Lord lays  
 upon the shoulders of His servant, Eliakim, "the heavy key of the palace  
 carried on a loop slung over the shoulder,"<sup>65</sup> which gave "both symbolic and  
 actual sole power to lock and unlock the principal door,"<sup>66</sup> and therefore  
 symbolizes "unlimited authority over the royal household, carrying with it  
 a similar authority in all affairs of state."<sup>67</sup> "The 'keys of the kingdom'  
 would be committed to the chief steward in the royal household, and with  
 them goes plenary authority."<sup>68, 69</sup> Similarly, Rev. 1:18 and 3:7 speak  
 of Christ as having "the keys of Death and Hades." The fact that Christ  
 and Peter alone are described as having "keys" in the New Testament  
 emphasizes the uniqueness of the office committed to Peter.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p.201-203.

<sup>63</sup>As the R.S.V. translates it.

<sup>64</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.208.

<sup>65</sup>R.B.Y. Scott, Interpreter's Bible, Nashville, Abingdon, Vol.5, p.293.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Skinner, quoted Flew, op. cit., p.94.

<sup>68</sup>S.E. Johnson, Interpreter's Bible, Nashville, Abingdon, Vol.7, p.451-453.

<sup>69</sup>On the illustration of the steward of the household see Mk.13:34; Lk.12:42;  
 16:1ff.; I Cor.4:1; I Pet.4:10.

<sup>70</sup>Flew rejects the above interpretation on the grounds that "the whole history  
 of the early Church contradicts this interpretation" (Flew, op. cit., p.94) -  
 see chapter III below - and instead connects it with Lk.11:52, Mt. 23:13,  
 where the key means "knowledge" which makes entrance to the kingdom  
 possible, and a Rabbinic saying, "He who has knowledge of the law without  
 reverence towards God, is like unto a treasurer who has been given the  
 inner key, but not the outer key. How can he enter?" The key is thus  
 "the spiritual insight" which enables Peter to lead others through the  
 door of revelation through which he has passed himself (or to exclude them).  
 It thus becomes eventually the possession of "every confessor of the Son  
 of God" (Ibid., p.96), "though on the day of Pentecost by common consent  
 he (Peter) was the first to use it" (Ibid., p.95). At several points this  
 seems to be the more unlikely interpretation.

"AND WHATEVER YOU BIND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN, AND WHATEVER YOU LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN": According to Cullmann, "on earth" and "in heaven" here correspond to "Church" and "kingdom of heaven" in the previous sentences. The Kingdom is not to be equated with Heaven, however.<sup>71</sup> The words, "bind" and "loose," signify, in Rabbinical usage, "prohibiting" and "permitting,"<sup>72</sup> or "banning" and "acquitting".<sup>73</sup> Probably both are included here.<sup>74</sup> The disciples,<sup>75</sup> and Peter especially, receive the power to decide practical questions of conduct and to discipline. The climax to Jesus' own functions delegated to them even in His lifetime,<sup>76</sup> is now the office of forgiving sins.

In all the above Scriptural passages we have seen that the unique position Peter later came to have as leader of the Jerusalem Church can definitely be traced to a commission from the earthly Jesus (even apart from Mt.16:17-19). Whether the governmental authority committed to him included infallible doctrinal authority, however, is disputable. And certainly the exegetical evidence has been against the possibility of its transference if it did.

#### THE ATTESTATION OF 'DUNAMIS'

"Jesus of Nazareth" was "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst."<sup>77</sup> But for a long time it was thought that the Gospel miracles were to be understood as primarily a means of ratification of Jesus' claim to possess divine authority as the Messiah, the Son of God incarnate. In reaction against this Fultmann and Dibelius, for instance, deny the genuineness of the miracle stories, on the theory that the early Church invented them as just such a means of ratification.<sup>78</sup> With the discrediting of the old "argument

<sup>71</sup>Flew, op. cit., p.97.

<sup>72</sup>"If one seah of unclean heave-offering falls into a hundred seahs of clean, the School of Shammai bind (forbid) the entire lot, but the School of Hillel loose (permit) it." (Terumoth 5:4, quoted S.E. Johnson, op. cit., p.451-53).

<sup>73</sup>Cf. Mt.18:18; Jn.20:23.

<sup>74</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.204f., Flew, op. cit., p.96f.

<sup>75</sup>Mt. 18:18.

<sup>76</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.204f.

<sup>77</sup>Ac.2:22.

<sup>78</sup>See, for instance, Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, p.131ff.

from miracle"<sup>79</sup> on the one hand, and the 'liberal' theology on the other hand, however, there has emerged generally both a recognition that the miracle stories are at least for the most part genuine (though many still doubt the nature-miracle stories), and that they were not primarily intended as such an attestation.

In New Testament times miracles did not necessarily prove divine authority for many others claimed to have such powers.<sup>80</sup> Far from making that His primary motive Jesus performed the miracles out of compassion, and in response to faith, as the Gospels abundantly witness. Matthew's Gospel tells us that right at the start of His ministry Jesus overcame the temptation to use miracles merely in order to attest His authority.<sup>81</sup> He knew that this would evince only a 'wunderglaube' from the crowd, and He desired that they should come instead to that true existential faith which would mean eyes that see and ears that hear.<sup>82</sup> This was why He forbade those upon whom He worked miracles of healing to proclaim them abroad.<sup>83</sup> When the Pharisees asked him for a 'sign' He refused it for the same reason.<sup>84</sup> If they refused to open their hearts to God in the first place He knew that no matter what miracle He did it would not evince true faith in them.<sup>85</sup> And that He was right is shown by the fact that in spite of His being "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs" He was "delivered up... crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."<sup>86</sup> Even the Resurrection appearances themselves, the manifestation of 'dunamis' par excellence, had to be received existentially.<sup>87</sup>

All this is not to deny that the miracles etc. wrought in the life of Jesus were an attestation of His authority, but only that they were primarily an attestation of His authority. Moreover, as we have seen, in

<sup>79</sup>See Richardson, Christian Apologetics, ch.7.

<sup>80</sup>Lk.11:19 etc.

<sup>81</sup>Mt.4:5-7.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. A. Richardson, "Miracle," ed. Richardson, A Theological Wordbook of the Bible, London, S.C.M., 1954.

<sup>83</sup>See Skinner, The Gospel of the Lord Jesus, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1937, ch.6,7, and 13.

<sup>84</sup>Mt.12:38-42; Lk.11:16,29-32; Mk.8:11-12; Mt.16:1-4; cf. Mk.11:27-33 & ICor.1:22.

<sup>85</sup>Lk.16:31 cf. Lk.10:13.

<sup>86</sup>Ac.2:22 and 23.

<sup>87</sup>Mt.28:17 cf. Jn.20:29.

so far as it was an attestation it was throughout an attestation that had to be received existentially. Jesus could not heal except in response to faith;<sup>88</sup> His miracles were received as more than mere wonders of a wonder-worker only by those whose hearts were so that they could "hear" God addressing them personally through the signs He wrought.<sup>89</sup> The implication of this is that there can be nothing external, not even an external authority, by which the Word can be tested finally:<sup>90</sup> it is its own authority, because its authority is the authority of the God who speaks it, and its authority can be recognized only when it is received existentially, but when it is received existentially its authority is recognized in the act of receiving it.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Mk.6:5.

<sup>89</sup> See the Introduction.

<sup>90</sup> It might be argued that Jn.14:11 does not seem to support this: but the point is that in contrast to Jesus' answer to the Pharisees request for a 'sign' He is here speaking to the disciples.

<sup>91</sup> It is true that the stories of His miracles were later told probably primarily as an attestation of the authority of Jesus as Son of God. But even then they were told to the "Theophiluses," i.e., the "Lovers of God," the men who would receive them existentially (Lk. 1:3).

## CHAPTER III

### AUTHORITY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT

On the one hand the apostles inherited the current conception of the Old Testament Scriptures, discussed in chapter I, and therefore regarded them as an infallible authority. "We find in the New Testament authors the same theoretical view of the Old Testament...as among the Jews of the time is general"<sup>1</sup>. Warfield has shown that they regarded the Old Testament as the very utterance of God.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, however, modern scholars have tended not to take enough account of the complete subjection of the Old Testament and its authority to the Word revealed in Jesus Christ and its authority. In the reaction against the traditional and fundamentalist "proof-text" method of polemic, modern commentators commonly dismiss all (or most) of the quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament, especially those in which any suspicion of "rabbinic exegesis" can be detected, as automatically invalid on first principles. But this is to assume that whenever the Old Testament is quoted it is quoted as a proof. I think it is Lightfoot, however, who has said that the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament usually are - a use which with his rigidly categorizing mind is difficult for the modern to grasp - something between illustrations and proofs.

Father Hebert divides the quotations into two main classes:<sup>3</sup> the theological and the illustrative. The theological use is instanced in the quotation concerning the promise given to Abraham in Gal.3:8. The weight of the argument does rest on the quotation; but Hebert also points

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<sup>1</sup>Rothe, Zur Dogmatik, quoted Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p.177f.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., e.g. the use of "God says" etc. before quoting from the Old Testament.

<sup>3</sup>Hebert, The Authority of the Old Testament, p.207ff.

out that it is selected merely as an example from extensive Old Testament data.<sup>4</sup> The illustrative use is instanced by Lightfoot, who sets side by side Philo's allegorical exegesis of the story of Hagar and Sarah and that of Paul, and says, "With Philo, the allegory is the whole substance of his teaching; with St. Paul it is but an accessory. He uses it rather as an illustration than as an argument, as a means of representing in a lively form the lessons being enforced on other grounds."<sup>5</sup> Included in the illustrative use is the 'homology,' i.e., a sort of illustrative analogy between something similar in the two dispensations, instanced in Mt.2:15, I Cor.10:1-13, Heb.7 etc. On the other hand, of course, there are quotations such as that in I Cor.9:9-10 (a typical example of rabbinical allegorical exegesis) which can be classified neither as theological nor as merely illustrative, and which are definitely to be criticized in their application!

The point of all this is that, far from seeking to subject the Word in Jesus Christ to the authority of the Old Testament, the apostles, allowing that the new Word had supreme authority, sought to show where it was foreshadowed in the Old Testament on the basis that in so far as the Old Testament was also true and authoritative it must corroborate the Word in Jesus Christ.

## 6

TRADITION

The New Testament itself was not immediately, as it came to be written, regarded as being 'Scripture,' and therefore it may be argued that it was not given the same authority as the Old Testament. But we have seen that the apostolic Church subjected the authority of the Old Testament to

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<sup>4</sup> He also points out that the principles behind such quotations (here that the imposition of the Law came after the promise that the Gentiles should share in the covenant) is usually vindicated by modern scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> Lightfoot, Galatians, p.199f., quoted Hebert, op. cit., p.210n.

<sup>6</sup> For an account of the history and use of the early 'tradition' see Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, Dodd, History and the Gospel, Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments.

that of the new Word in Jesus Christ. And this took the form of subjecting the Old Testament to the 'paradosis' which Jesus originated in His Church,<sup>7</sup> and which was developed in the apostolic age. The role the apostles understood the 'paradosis' as being meant to play is seen in that the doctrine of the apostolic (and sub-apostolic) Church was 'controlled' by the authority of the 'paradosis.'<sup>8</sup> It was to this that Paul appealed as a supreme authority in controversy.<sup>9</sup> It is when he is not able to quote from the 'paradosis' that he is more tentative in authority, as in I Cor.7:12 - and even here he is endeavouring to make a judgment in the light of - we may say as an extension of - the 'paradosis.'<sup>10</sup>

In various places Paul refers to his having "received" something, often "from the Lord."<sup>11</sup> Cullmann, supported by most scholars, rejects the explanation of this as information received by means of visions and shows that it is a terminology relating to 'paradosis.' "I received it from the Lord" thus means "I received it through the chain of tradition which begins with the Lord," or as Cullmann interprets it, "I received it through the chain of tradition which begins with the historical Jesus and of which the exalted Lord is the real author as it develops itself in the apostolic Church." Cullmann also quotes many places where expressions connected with the idea of tradition occur and are used very much like technical terms (e.g., "stand in," "receive," "deliver"), besides the actual occurrence of the terms 'paradosis' and the plural 'paradoseis.' Following E.B. Allo he interprets the 'kai' which occurs in such passages as I Cor.11:23, 15:1. and 15:3 to refer to the manner of transmission: "I received the tradition in the same way as I handed it on to you - i.e., by mediation." Thus, he argues, the phrase, 'apo tou kuriou' in I Cor.11:23 does not exclude mediation. The content of

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<sup>7</sup>See chapter II.

<sup>8</sup>Williams, Authority in the Apostolic Age, p.24.

<sup>9</sup>I Cor.15:1-8; 1:13; 3:16; 5:7; 6:15,19.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. I Cor.2:16.

<sup>11</sup>I Cor.15:3; 11:23; cf. I Th.4:15; I Cor.7:10,25; 9:14 etc.

the 'paradosis' in I Cor.15:3ff. is linguistically unPauline, which therefore indicates that it, and also I Cor.11:23ff., are taken over from a text already fixed before Paul. It has been argued that when Paul went to Jerusalem to visit Peter<sup>12</sup> his object was to receive tradition from him - just as one rabbi would receive tradition from another rabbi.<sup>13</sup>

It is here too that we are to find the explanation of Paul's differing expressions in I Cor.7:10, 7:12, 7:25, 7:40, 14:37, II Cor.2:10 and 13:3. Sometimes these have been interpreted to mean that Paul was here "conscious of degrees in his own inspiration,"<sup>14</sup> but the explanation given by Cullmann, and by Dodd,<sup>15</sup> is much more probable: in I Cor.7:10 Paul was acquainted with a definite logion of the historical Jesus in the 'paradosis' which dealt with the matter under discussion, in I Cor.7:12, 25 and 40 he was not. In I Cor.14:37, II Cor.2:10 and 13:3, we may add, he was speaking as an apostle, i.e., as one chosen to transmit the 'paradosis' who was therefore "trustworthy" in applying and extending it.<sup>16</sup>

We have seen that the 'paradosis' as Paul uses the term included the utterances of Jesus on specific ethical problems etc., and Cullmann maintains that while at first it consisted of the summary of faith contained in the 'kerygma' it later went on to include words of Jesus, narratives from His life, and the theological interpretation of the facts.<sup>17</sup> But more probably, since Jesus originated the 'paradosis,' it included all these elements from the beginning, i.e., what we may put under the different headings of 'kerygma' and 'didache.' It is with the 'didache' that Formgeschichte has concerned itself, but in criticism of some of its conclusions we must say that the part of the early Church in the formation of this was one of selecting rather than original contribution.<sup>18</sup> As far as the 'kerygma'

<sup>12</sup>Gal.1:18.

<sup>13</sup>But see the section 'Inner Light' below.

<sup>14</sup>Sanday, Inspiration, p.357ff., 387ff.; cf. Warfield who interprets I Cor. 7:40 as "meiotic irony" (Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p.425).

<sup>15</sup>Dodd, History and the Gospel, p.57.

<sup>16</sup>See below on I Cor.7:25.

<sup>17</sup>Cullmann, The Early Church, p.64-67.

<sup>18</sup>See Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, Dodd, History and the Gospel, A.M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament, 1900-1950, London, S.C.M., 1951, p.37ff., A.Richardson, Preface to Bible Study, London, S.C.M., 1950, p.94ff. See also below concerning the 'hupōretai'.

is concerned, Dodd has given us the most valuable treatment of its primitive<sup>19</sup> content. How authoritative it was regarded is shown by the fact that it was out of the kerygma that the rule of faith emerged, and out of it in turn that the creeds emerged. "The so-called Apostles' Creed in particular still betrays in its form and language its direct descent from the primitive<sup>20</sup> apostolic preaching." It was itself ultimately derived "directly out of<sup>21</sup> the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God and all that hangs upon it."

A third element in the 'paradosis' was the tradition of accepted common practice. I Cor.11:16 provides evidence of an authoritative custom in the churches. Paul regarded the custom as a ground of appeal in the matter of authority. Its authority arose from the fact that it was general-<sup>22</sup> ly accepted in the majority of the churches. It included baptism, the<sup>23</sup> eucharist, the existence of a ministry of certain ranks or functions,<sup>24</sup> and Williams also adds the traditions of financial interdependence and unity<sup>25</sup> of the Church.

To all of these appeal was made in the matter of authority. It was out of a combination of the elements of 'kerygma' and 'didache,'<sup>26</sup> preserved and recited by the 'hupēretai,' that the Gospels as we know them developed, with the purpose of compiling a reliable, and hence authoritative,<sup>27</sup> historical tradition. The need of such a written-down authority was made

<sup>19</sup>Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.176.

<sup>21</sup>Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, p.180.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. the appeal to baptism in I Cor.1:13ff.; Ro.6; Titus3:5,21 etc.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. I Cor.10:16f.; 11:23ff.; Heb.13:10.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. I Cor.12:28ff.

<sup>25</sup>See Williams, op. cit., p.99ff.

<sup>26</sup>This Greek term is used in Lk.4:20 to denote the synagogue instructor who recited the Law etc. Ac.13:5 uses it for a companion of Paul, viz., John Mark, later Peter's companion. It is argued that the Christian 'hupēretēs' had the duty of preserving and reciting the new 'paradosis,' i.e., the Gospel (cf. Lk.1:2). Later Mark was given permission to write down the 'paradosis' and became known as Peter's interpreter (Papias). Timothy, Titus and Luke would have filled the same office. This explains why the Gospel was not immediately written down and also goes to refute the radical conclusions of Formgeschichte. (I owe this to Professor Maxwell).

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Lk.1:1-4.

all the more necessary by the rise of false teaching which threatened to pervert the Church. Thus the New Testament canon was the crystallization of the historical tradition as it came to be more sharply seen in the fight of the Church against heresies. But within the New Testament itself, and this is very important, we see the realization, at least by implication, that the word and the "formulated" Word were not to be identified, in that the crystallizing of the historical tradition was not regarded as ruling out new reinterpretations in terms of new categories, as in St. John's Gospel. In fact the tradition of the 'kerygma' itself seems to have altered its perspective "even within a few years," and this in respect of the imminence of the Second Advent.<sup>28</sup> "The consequent demand for readjustment was a principal cause of the development of early Christian thought."<sup>29, 30</sup> On the other hand, Williams sees in I Cor.4:17 and 7:17 the germ of the principle 'semper, ubique, et ab omnibus,' at least in the sphere of the tradition of common practice, or custom.

In all this we have seen what the 'paradosis' included, and what its authority was. Because the exalted Lord was regarded as standing behind the apostolic transmission of the 'paradosis,' and proclaiming now, through the 'paradosis,' that which He had taught His disciples during His incarnation on earth. Thus the apostolic 'paradosis' is regarded as having the authority of Christ Himself, in the fullest possible sense. But it was the apostolic 'paradosis' that was regarded as having authority. Thus it is that in the key passages for the 'paradosis' of Christ, such as I Cor.15:3ff., the apostolate is always dealt with at the same time. Hence the 'ego' in I Cor.11:23 also: "I (i.e., the apostle) received from the Lord...." Similarly in I Cor.7:25, according to Gullmann, the 'ego' refers

<sup>28</sup> Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, p.63ff.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.73 cf. p.77-129.

<sup>30</sup> Thus theology came in with its use of the Reason - at least more explicitly than before. But, we note, reason was always used, at the beginning at any rate, not as an authoritative source but as the handmaid of faith, i.e. from the existential viewpoint of faith. The reinterpretations were always orientated to the 'given' fundamental convictions of the original gospel (Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, p.182ff.) i.e., to the Word itself.

to the function of the apostle as a trustworthy transmitter of the 'paradosis' and, as such, to give judgments which go beyond the 'paradosis' but are subject to it - are, as it were, an extension of it.<sup>31</sup>

#### THE INNER LIGHT

The direct communication of the prophet is not the same thing as that of the mystic. But Paul seems to have experienced them both; or, at least, that is the apparent implication of his distinction between the type of experience to which he refers in Gal.1:12.16 and that of II Cor.12. In the first he receives a Word, a gospel, a message to be communicated: in the second he "heard unutterable utterances which it is not possible for a man to tell,"<sup>32</sup> the typical experience of the mystic.<sup>33</sup>

In Gal.1:11-2:2 Paul claims that the actual gospel he preaches came to him "through a revelation of Jesus Christ," i.e., through a direct, personal, immediate revelation given to him by Christ Himself.<sup>34</sup> He does not mean, as he is sometimes interpreted to mean, that merely the commission to preach came to him through Jesus Christ's being revealed to him on the road to Damascus: he means that his gospel, that which he preaches concerning the way of God's salvation, was revealed to him by direct revelation. It was neither put into his hands by men nor explained to him by men.<sup>35</sup> In 1:18

he is at pains to point out that this journey was made only after an interval of some years, and that it arose from a simple and natural desire 'to make the acquaintance of Cephas' (i.e. Peter). Paul here purposely employs a word which is frequently used of travellers paying visits: he went to visit Peter, not to receive instruction from him.<sup>36</sup>

The "gospel" that he received thus included the theological understanding of of the meaning and application of the facts of the history of salvation, but also, as Cullmann points out, the facts themselves, in so far as the

<sup>31</sup>We shall continue the discussion of the authority of the apostles in a separate section.

<sup>32</sup>II Cor.12:4. "Not possible" rather than "not lawful" is the correct rendering according to J. Massie, "Galatians" Century Bible, London, Caxton, Vol.16, p.326.

<sup>33</sup>See T. Corbishley, "Do the Mystics Know?", Hibbert Journal, October, 1951.

<sup>34</sup>For the meaning of the phrase, "of Jesus Christ," cf. I Cor.12:1, "revelations of the Lord."

<sup>35</sup>Gal.1:12. Moffat's translation.

<sup>36</sup>G. Duncan, Galatians (Moffat New Testament Commentary), London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1934, p.31. See Duncan, and, more especially, R. Stamm, Interpreter's Bible, Abingdon, Nashville, Vol.IX, on the whole of this passage.

Resurrection is an actual fact and the climax of all the other facts.<sup>37</sup>

We note, however, that Paul regarded his experience, which took place on the way to Damascus and in Arabia,<sup>38</sup> as the chief ground of his claim to apostleship. In so far, then, as the office of apostleship belongs to the period of the foundation of the Church,<sup>39</sup> this cannot be an immediate source of revelation for us, at least in the fundamental way that it was for St Paul.

But in I Cor.7:40, in the words, "I think I have the Spirit of God," Paul claims a much less radical and decisive experience, one which is not to be identified with the type of mystical experience we referred to above, though it is definitely related to what has sometimes been called "Christ-mysticism," i.e., Paul's experience of the mystical relationship, 'in Christ.'<sup>40</sup> Here Paul is referring not to a revelation by direct communication but to a conclusion to which he believes he is guided by the Spirit, but at which he arrives through the use of reason. Here reason is the handmaid of the Spirit in a much more active way.<sup>41</sup> And it may fairly be claimed that this is something not confined to the apostles, although, no doubt, they may have received a fuller measure of the "inspiration" of the Spirit."<sup>42</sup> But perhaps for that very reason it is tentative.

All of these experiences, all of these authorities, it is important to note, Paul subjects to the authority of the 'paradosis.' He subjects the experience of all ecstasy to the tradition concerning Jesus' Lordship,<sup>43</sup> and the experience of all ethical behaviour in which it results to the traditional ethic revealed in Christ.<sup>44</sup> He submitted the gospel he had received by revelation to the apostles in Jerusalem, "in case somehow"

<sup>37</sup>Cf. Ac.1:22; I Cor.9:1.

<sup>38</sup>Gal.1:17.

<sup>39</sup>See the section, "Peter, the Rock," in the previous chapter.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Gal.2:20; II Cor.5:17 etc. See also II Cor.3:14ff. Also Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.180, J. Stewart, A Man in Christ, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1951, chap.4.

<sup>41</sup>See the footnote on the function of reason in the previous section.

<sup>42</sup>"I think I have the Spirit of God."

<sup>43</sup>I Cor.12:3. Cf. 1 Jn.4:2f. where John subjects it to the 'paradosis' also, the 'paradosis' concerning the Incarnation.

<sup>44</sup>I Cor.13.

he should be "running...in vain."<sup>45</sup> And even the judgment he makes thinking he has the Spirit of God is made with the intention that it should be built upon the principles of the 'paradosis', as we have seen. "What Paul lays down, even under the guidance of the Spirit, is subordinate and derivative" to the 'paradosis,'<sup>46</sup> and he "will not recognize as a valid experience of guidance by the Spirit anything which is not continuous with the...tradition."<sup>47</sup>

While Paul completely subordinates the authority of his own judgments under the guidance of the Spirit to the 'paradosis' however, he also strictly subordinates the authority of the judgments of all those who are not apostles to his judgments,<sup>48</sup> for the apostles claimed that they had been promised an inspiration that would ensure that their judgments were the judgments of the Spirit.<sup>49</sup>

#### THE APOSTLES

St Paul obviously considered himself to stand in an authoritative relation to his readers, and made claim to this even to the extent of settling their affairs.<sup>50</sup> The authority of the apostle was not limited. It included the correction of errors in the churches, the strengthening of unity, strengthening in resistance of persecution, instruction on spiritual and moral matters and matters of order.<sup>51</sup>

Thus in his letters Paul always starts by claiming the title 'apostolos.' The ground of his authority rests in nothing else than his apostleship. That apostolic status carries with it authority is stressed, for instance, in Paul's discussion of the matter with reference to "false apostles" in II Cor.10-13. The assumption that lies behind his claim to

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<sup>45</sup>Gal.2:2.

<sup>46</sup>Dodd, History and the Gospel, p.57f.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p.56f.

<sup>48</sup>I Cor.14:37

<sup>49</sup>Jn.14:25-26; 16:13-15.

<sup>50</sup>E.g., in writing to the Corinthians, I Cor.4:17; 4:21; 5:5ff.; 9:17; 11:34.

<sup>51</sup>Williams, op. cit., p.48f.

be "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" is that "the very chiefest apostles" had a unique authority. The historical books, the Gospels and Acts, also show an increasing emphasis on the authority of the apostles.<sup>52</sup>

When Paul claims the title 'apostolos' he stresses the divine commission involved in this status,<sup>53</sup> for this is the ground upon which that authority rested.<sup>54</sup> We have seen that the conditions of apostleship consisted in having seen the Risen Lord and having received a special commission from Him.<sup>55, 56</sup> Paul distinguished between "the Twelve (apostles)," "all the apostles," and the "five hundred brethren" to whom Christ appeared in I Cor.15, thereby revealing that merely having seen the Risen Christ did not constitute apostleship; on the other hand he stresses both his having witnessed the Resurrection and his having received a commission in his claims to apostleship.<sup>57</sup> Dodd points out that the Gospels seem to include the large class of stories of vocation (Peter, Andrew, the Sons of Zebedee, Levi, Philip) with the motive of establishing the fact that certain persons in the early Church possessed the authority given by a direct call of Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

The Twelve, as the apostles par excellence, were assigned apostolic authority par excellence, but the authority of the other apostles - notably that of St Paul - was to a certain extent merged with theirs. The authority of St Paul, who was an exception however, eventually came to be put on a level completely equal.

That the authority of the apostles constituted a very real authority, constituted in fact the authority of Christ Himself, is seen in the words, "He that heareth you heareth Me,"<sup>59</sup> and also in Jesus' charge

<sup>52</sup>Williams, *op. cit.*, p.109.

<sup>53</sup>E.g., Gal.1:1ff.

<sup>54</sup>Gal.1 and 2; I Cor.1:1.17 etc.

<sup>55</sup>In chapter II.

<sup>56</sup>Williams wrongly omits the witness of the Resurrection in his definition (*Williams. op. cit.*, p.48). On the other hand Cullmann says (*Cullmann, The Early Church*, p.72) that when the word "apostle" is used not in connection with the Twelve it denotes "simply an eyewitness of the resurrection" (I Cor.15:7; Ro.16:7; etc.). But the very word "apostle" means "one sent forth." (See the following sentences). J.Y. Campbell (*Campbell, "Apostle."* ed. Richardson, *Theological Wordbook of the Bible*) thinks the conditions of apostleship cannot be deduced, however.

<sup>57</sup>I Cor.9:1; Gal.1:12.

<sup>58</sup>This conclusion is based on the methods of Form Criticism.

<sup>59</sup>Lk.10:16 cf. Mt.10:40f.

to Peter which we discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, as Forsyth points out, the apostles claim for their words a like permanent authority with Christ's in so far as they even ignored His precepts to the extent of seldom<sup>60</sup> or never quoting them, making instead their own. And the Jerusalem Council implies that because it has made a certain decision that decision<sup>61</sup> must be the decision of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand the apostles' authority was not above that of the 'paradosis.'

The apostles indeed...have an authority which, reasonably considered, is unique...but when we find them appealing to members to the Church...they are the ministers of a 'tradition' to which they themselves are subject, a 'tradition' once for all delivered.<sup>62</sup>

Paul is "as sure as any of the Old Testament prophets was ever sure that the message which he delivered was no invention of his own,"<sup>63</sup> but that was just because it was grounded in the authoritative 'paradosis.' Moreover, the authority of the apostles consisted essentially in the fact that they were a band of men whom Christ had elected specially for the transmitting of the 'paradosis,' promising them the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, i.e., it was essentially a delegated authority, and thus really pointed to the supreme authority of Christ. Finally, in so far as it depended on conditions that could not be repeated, it was an authority that could not<sup>64</sup> be transferred.

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<sup>60</sup> P.T. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p.165.

<sup>61</sup> Ac.15:28. But see the section, 'The Ministry of the Church' below.

<sup>62</sup> Gore, Lux Mundi, p.339.

<sup>63</sup> Sanday, Inspiration, p.332.

<sup>64</sup> See section, "Peter, the Rock," in chapter II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

St Paul attempted neither to claim nor display infallibility in writing his letters. One point that has emerged from the discussion of 'paradosis' in this chapter, especially in the differing expressions in I Cor. 7:10, 7:12, 7:25, 7:40, 14:37, II Cor.2:10 and 18:13 is that St Paul was clearly aware of writing with a less final authority when he could not decide a matter under dispute by reference to the logia of the 'paradosis,' but had to rely on his own judgment, even though it was guided by the Spirit, and even though he did claim authority for that judgment. Moreover, as C.A. Scott points out, St Paul is not always entirely consistent with himself in his writing; and he does not hesitate to correct himself "in a way that would not be possible if he thought himself to be writing at the dictation<sup>65</sup> of the Spirit," e.g., in I Cor.1:14-16.

He permits us to see quite plainly the natural, human way in which these letters were written. He wrestles with problems of expression in language, he breaks off sentences, he corrects himself while he is writing; the divine revelation seems to be something which is freely appropriated in a natural human activity.<sup>66</sup>

This does not mean that he does not claim inspiration, and therefore the authority which inspiration implies, although not going out of his way to do so. We have already seen this in his claim to "have the Spirit of God" in making a judgment concerning marriage.<sup>67</sup> And in fact, according to Sanday, "it is impossible to read the first few chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>68</sup> or the first chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians without feeling that his own inspiration is an axiom of his thought, and...in the thought of Christians generally."<sup>69</sup> What St Paul here claims seems to be something between the claim of the writer of the Apocalypse, which at least approaches something like infallibility,<sup>70</sup> and at

<sup>65</sup>C.A. Anderson Scott, Saint Paul, the Man and Teacher, London, C.U.P., 1936, p.68. My italics.

<sup>66</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.128. Cf. Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.206f.

<sup>67</sup>I Cor.7:40.

<sup>68</sup>See especially I Cor.2:13,16.

<sup>69</sup>Sanday, Inspiration, p.350.

<sup>70</sup>See Rev.22:18-19.

times dictation,<sup>71</sup> and that of St Luke who claims no more than to have sifted the sources available to him as 'scientifically' as he was able in order to provide a reliable, and therefore authoritative historical tradition.<sup>72</sup>

The writers of the New Testament, therefore, claimed authority for what they wrote, but not infallible authority (with the possible exception of the Apocalypse). They did not equate the inspiration with which they wrote with the inspiration they attributed to the Old Testament, which implied infallibility. It was not on the grounds that they were writing Scripture that the New Testament writers claimed authority. They claimed authority for what they wrote on the grounds that behind it stood apostolic authority<sup>73</sup> (whether they themselves were apostles or not) and the authority of the apostles rested upon the fact, as we have seen, that they were the men elected by Christ to be the transmitters and "formulators" of the 'paradosis,' and as having been specially promised an inspiration by the Spirit in this transmission and formulation.

Once we see clearly this relation between the authority of the New Testament writings, the authority of the apostles, and the authority of the 'paradosis,' we can more exactly appreciate and understand the mind of the early Church when the apostles died and it collected the writings and oral tradition<sup>74</sup> they had left behind them into the body of Scripture called the New Testament, making this the standard of faith for the growing Church, and, though reinterpreting it in creed and theology, retaining it as the ultimate incarnate authority.<sup>75</sup> In this relation the ultimate answer must be sought to the questions whether a strict distinction is to be made between the authorities of the apostolic 'paradosis' and the tradition which found expression in the later "living voice" of the Church (whether

<sup>71</sup>He addresses the churches in Chapters 2 and 3 in the form of words spoken directly by the Spirit. See Sanday, Inspiration, p.375ff.

<sup>72</sup>Lk.1:1-4. See the section in this chapter on 'Tradition.' Cf. also the remark about the writers of the historical books of the Old Testament in Chapter I, section 'The Scriptures.'

<sup>73</sup>See the previous section. This is not, however, to deny that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit in writing.

<sup>74</sup>I.e., the apostolic 'paradosis' was collected to form a standard by the gathering of the apostles' writings and by their disciples' writing down that part of it which was not actually contained in their writings but was necessary to supplement the part that was.

<sup>75</sup>See also Williams, op. cit., p.40f.

or not that tradition was directly handed on from the apostolic 'paradosis'), and if so what the relationship is between them. Here the fact for us to note as present is that in the apostolic age the authority of the apostolic writings was no more and no less than the authority of the apostles as such. <sup>76</sup>

#### THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Authority is needed in the constantly succeeding ages of the Church's history in the realms of theological teaching, practical decision, and liturgical ministration. The message of the Church must be constantly interpreted for each age, and that message if it is to be living must be interpreted by and spoken through certain persons. It is necessary therefore that these persons be themselves under an authority so that they may be guided, restrained, and kept faithful to the truth once for all delivered. We have discussed the unique authority of the apostles. But in the New Testament we find also certain persons designated "teachers," to take only one example, who, we may assume, included theological interpretation in their teaching. St Paul recognized lesser offices of ministry also in messengers such as Titus and Epaphroditus, prophets, local overseers (episkopoi/presbuteroi), helpers, etc., some of whom he himself appointed. <sup>77</sup> In Heb.13:7-8 we find "the rule over you" to be vested in leaders "which spake unto you the Word of God."

We see, therefore, that the necessity for human authorities arose from the need for unity and order in the Church's belief and practice, and not for the legal trusteeship of a grace or commission. <sup>78</sup> While the apostles were still alive authority was so uniquely vested in them, however, that the rest of the 'ministry' of the Church remained fluid and immature.

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<sup>76</sup>See further chapter IV on the New Testament concept of the relationship between the apostolic writings and Scripture.

<sup>77</sup>Cf. Ac.11:30; 14:23 etc.

<sup>78</sup>Williams, op. cit., p.59.

The New Testament gives no support to the view that in the earliest times there was a single, universal system of Church order.

Whatever else is disputable, there is one result from which there is no escape: in the primitive Church there was no single system of Church order laid down by the apostles. During the first hundred years of Christianity the Church was an organism alive and growing, changing its organization to meet changing needs. Clearly in Asia, Syria, and Rome in that century the system of government varied from church to church and in the same church at different times. Uniformity was a later development.<sup>79</sup>

This is the reason why certain Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent, have all been able to find evidence for the existence of their own ecclesiastical polity in the New Testament. And the reason for this fluidity was because authority was concentrated in the apostles to an exclusive extent. While this was so there could be no idea that certain 'depositaries'<sup>80</sup> would be able to succeed to the unique apostolic office of having custody of the 'paradosis'. Those who formed the ministry of the apostolic Church, such as Timothy and Titus, for example, were regarded as completely dependent on the apostles for whatever authority they had.<sup>81</sup> Theirs was essentially a delegated authority.

At the same time the fact that "the apostles and the elders<sup>82</sup> gathered together to consider" the relation of the Law to the Christianity of the Gentiles at the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts,<sup>83</sup> and that all, elders as well as apostles, decided the matter and sent the letter gives us another aspect of the picture. It raises the question whether a council representing the Church as a whole but not necessarily an apostolic council, may legitimately claim its formal decisions to be the decisions of the Holy Spirit, as the Jerusalem Council claimed,<sup>84</sup> i.e., to have final authority, and, if so, under what conditions. We note that even in the

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<sup>79</sup>Streeter, quoted Robinson, Notes on The Primitive Church. Cf. also E. Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, London, Lutterworth, p.29f., Williams, op. cit., chap.3,4,7.

<sup>80</sup>See chapter II, under 'Tradition.'

<sup>81</sup>I Tim.1:3; Tit.1:5.

<sup>82</sup>Ac.15:6.

<sup>83</sup>Ac.15:1-35, q.v.

<sup>84</sup>Ac.15:28.

days of the Twelve there had been stress on their corporate authority, on their authority as a body. The fact that the elders were brought in here when the decision concerned an important doctrinal matter seems to provide ground for holding that the decisions of later ecumenical councils would be similarly authoritative, or at least would be if the council in humility and prayer subjected itself to the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, from the Protestant standpoint in modern times it may be argued that the fact that at the time of the Jerusalem Council there was no uniformity or set form of Church government and the fact that the Council was representative of the whole Church, Jewish and Gentile, implies that such an ecumenical council would have to include representatives from the whole Church, and not just that part of it which has remained loyal to the Bishop of Rome.

#### PETER, THE ROCK

We have seen that to a large extent the meaning of the unique position ascribed to St Peter in some of the sayings in the Gospels must be determined in the light of how the apostolic Church understood them, i.e., by the nature of Peter's position in the Church of the apostolic age. That Peter did take a clearly unique position in the primitive Church in Jerusalem is shown clearly in the Book of Acts. "In the changed situation after Jesus' death, ... he ... occupies a leading role in relation to the Church; he stands at its head."<sup>85</sup> The letters of St Paul, also indirectly confirm this.<sup>86</sup> But, maintains Cullmann, when Peter left Jerusalem he handed over this leadership of the Church to James, the brother of the Lord, in order to give himself to missionary work.<sup>87</sup> "The two functions - church administration and missionary work - were separated."<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Cullmann, Peter, Disciple - Apostle - Martyr, p.35. Cf. Ac. 1:15ff., 2:14ff., 3:4, 4:8, 5:29, 5:1ff., 8:14ff.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 37ff. Cf. e.g. Gal. 1:18ff.

<sup>87</sup> See in this connection Ac. 12:17.

<sup>88</sup> Cullmann, Peter, Disciple - Apostle - Martyr, p.41.

Cullmann maintains this on the following grounds: (1) It explains James' leadership at the Council of Jerusalem (which included Peter, who must have interrupted his missionary labours to attend it and at the Council spoke merely as the representative of the mission to the Jews).<sup>89</sup> (2) It also explains the order in which Paul lists the "pillars" in Gal.2:9.<sup>90</sup> (3) It explains the fact that in Gal.2:11ff. "Peter does not appear in any sense as Paul's superior, but on the contrary must accept a rebuke from him."<sup>91</sup> Peter had now become the leader of the Christian mission to the Jews of the Dispersion,<sup>92</sup> as Paul became the leader of the mission to the Gentiles.<sup>93</sup> As such, however, he was dependent on the Church in Jerusalem. But Gal.2:9 shows that the Jerusalem group renounced in principle the claim of oversight of the Pauline mission, i.e., Paul was independent not only of the Mother Church in Jerusalem (towards which, however, and partly for the sake of the unity of the Church, he established the obligation of the collection), but especially of Peter.<sup>94</sup> (4) It explains Peter's "dissembling" in Gal.2:11ff., for "as the missionary leader dependent on the Jerusalem church, he occupied in relation to the party of James an infinitely more difficult position than did the independent Paul. This conflict must have put Peter, the former and first head of the Church, in a particularly painful dilemma."<sup>95</sup>

This is not to deny that the promise of Jesus to Peter as 'the Rock' did involve a unique leadership in the Church. On the one hand Peter's leadership of the primitive Church was essentially non-transferable in character; on the other hand there had to be leadership later in the Church, so that Peter is the archetype and example for all future church leadership. James took over the leadership of the Church; but Peter retains for all time

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<sup>89</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.50.

<sup>90</sup>Knox would avoid this implication by suggesting that the names are in the order in which Paul interviewed them (Knox, Off the Record, p.59).

<sup>91</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.46.

<sup>92</sup>Cf. I Pet.1:1.

<sup>93</sup>Gal.2:9.

<sup>94</sup>Gal.1 and 2 are concerned to assert Paul's independence of the authority of Jerusalem - and that his authority came from a personal, direct experience. See the section in the present chapter, 'The Inner Light.'

<sup>95</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.51. Italics original.

the unique greatness and dignity of having been in the first days of the Church of Jesus Christ its leader. The original Church was founded upon the leadership of Peter, but when the foundation was laid Peter gave it up and James took over, Peter himself concentrating his entire powers to missionary work.<sup>96</sup>

After an extensive examination of the literary, liturgical, and archeological evidence,<sup>97</sup> Cullmann, chiefly on the basis of the literary sources, reaches the conclusion that "probably Peter actually was in Rome and suffered execution under Nero...in the Vatican district."<sup>98</sup> But this, as such, does not "furnish a foundation for the papal claim" of Roman Catholicism.<sup>99</sup> It will not do to argue that Peter went to Rome to "transfer" the primacy from Jerusalem to that place. Peter left Jerusalem to spread the gospel. The significant thing is that in relation to the new leadership at Jerusalem he does not continue in some superior position, as though James were only his substitute, or as though the leadership of the church at Jerusalem already meant only a local authority.<sup>100</sup>

#### THE ATTESTATION OF 'DUNAMIS'

In the apostolic age there is an almost paradoxical attitude towards signs of 'dunamis' as attestations of authority, an attitude already evident in the age of the Incarnation. On the one hand those who "demand signs"<sup>101</sup> are contrasted with those who accept the stumbling-block of the Cross as their salvation. On the other hand demonstrations of 'dunamis' do indicate authority, and the two ideas of 'dunamis' and 'exousia' are very closely related in the New Testament. The 'dunamis' of God vindicated the revelation of the Old Testament,<sup>102</sup> and Paul links this with the new dispensation. The gospel both revealed itself as a 'dunamis' within

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p.223ff.

<sup>97</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.70-152.

<sup>98</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p.152. Cf. also Toynbee and Perkins, The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations, London, Longmans, 1956.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p.71.

<sup>100</sup>Cf. Ibid., p.223ff.

<sup>101</sup>I Cor.1:22. Cf. I Cor.1 and 2 passim.

<sup>102</sup>Cf. Ps.105, 106, Exodus etc.

the regenerate,<sup>103</sup> and also came with outward demonstrations of the 'dunamis'  
of the Spirit.<sup>104</sup> St Paul actually appeals to the 'power'-ful manifestation  
which accompanied the Corinthians' experience of conversion as an attestation  
of the superiority of the gospel to any worldly wisdom,<sup>105</sup> and to "the  
demonstration of the Spirit and 'dunamis'"<sup>106</sup> which accompanied his preaching  
as an attestation of its and his authority.<sup>107</sup>

The manifestations of 'dunamis' included the 'pneumatika' or  
'charismata' (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles etc.). Miracles  
are described as 'energēmata dunameōn.' The supreme demonstration of  
'dunamis' is the Resurrection.<sup>108</sup> This was the final proof of the  
authority of the Christian revelation or 'Word' to the early Christians.  
Thus the faith of the early Church was a faith based above all on the  
Resurrection. The 'dunamis' of the Resurrection was a final attestation  
of authority on which the whole gospel depended. Modern theologians who  
explain the Resurrection in terms of subjective or psychological experience  
often fail to perceive that had the early Christians thought such explanation  
possible it would<sup>have</sup> invalidated for them the authority with which they  
proclaimed it as the one thing that finally had vindicated the Christian  
faith. It was just this, the supreme manifestation of 'dunamis', that made  
the apostles' tongues speak with such tremendous authority when they  
proclaimed the gospel.

True authority in the New Testament is a 'dynamic' authority.  
A gospel which was not attested by the manifestation of 'dunamis' in  
changing lives would not be true. At the same time it was recognized that the  
manifestations of this 'dunamis' must be seen from an existential viewpoint:  
the "Jews" were still seeking for signs,<sup>109</sup> the Greeks were scandalized by

<sup>103</sup> I Cor.13:3; II Th.1:11; Eph.1:19; Ro.1:16; I Cor.1:18.

<sup>104</sup> I Th.1:2-5; I Cor.2:3-5 etc.

<sup>105</sup> I Cor.1:18-2:16.

<sup>106</sup> I Cor.2:1ff. R.S.V. Cf. II Cor.12:12.

<sup>107</sup> It was not a ground of his authority (see the section, 'The Apostles'),  
but it was an attestation of his authority.

<sup>108</sup> Ro.1:3-4 cf. II Cor.13:4.

<sup>109</sup> I Cor.1:22.

the stumbling-block of the Resurrection,<sup>110</sup> and the exorcism of the slave girl only made her owners violently hostile to Paul.<sup>111</sup>

Lastly, the attestation of 'dunamis' was above all an attestation of the authority of the Spirit of God, the supreme Authority. Paul reminded the Corinthians of the "demonstration of the Spirit and power."<sup>112</sup> The miracles etc. that the Corinthians experienced are called 'pneumatika.'<sup>113</sup> In His Resurrection Jesus is "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness."<sup>114</sup> The 'dunamis' which accompanied the preaching of the apostles attested the authority of the 'Word' they proclaimed, and thereby attested the authority of the Spirit for the authority of the Word is the authority of the Spirit. What is proclaimed can only become the Word when it is personally addressed by (the Spirit of) God, and therefore its authority is the authority of the One who addresses it to the individual, i.e., the authority of God.<sup>115, 116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> I Cor.2:4 R.S.V.

<sup>113</sup> I Cor.12:1 etc.

<sup>114</sup> Ro.1:4.

<sup>115</sup> See the Introduction.

<sup>116</sup> See further on 'dunamis' in the apostolic age Williams, op. cit., chap.5, to which I owe much of the material in this section.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AUTHORITY IN THE AGE AFTER THE APOSTLES.

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT

We have seen in Chapter I how later Judaism, partly under the influence of the Hellenism of Alexandrian Judaism, adopted a concept of the Scriptures as infallibly dictated by God, and how the apostles inherited this. From the apostles, in turn, those who lived after them inherited the idea of the Old Testament as an infallible authority. In Judaism the concept of inspiration had been essentially bound up with the concept of infallibility, and in the early Church, with the increasing influence of Greek ideas of inspiration, we find Pseudo-Justin, for instance, maintaining that the authors of Scripture "had no need ... but to present themselves pure to the energy of the Divine Spirit, in order that the divine plectrum itself, descending from heaven, and using righteous men as an instrument like a harp or lyre, might reveal to us the knowledge of things divine and heavenly."<sup>1</sup> Athenagoras spoke of the "Spirit making use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute."<sup>2</sup> Later the metaphor of the Scriptural writer as a pen in the hands of the Holy Spirit also became frequent.<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, Irenaeus and Origen were amongst those who followed this way of thinking. On the other hand later Chrysostom, Basil and Jerome, at least when they were not expressing formally a description of inspiration, were more disposed to recognise the individuality of the writers.<sup>4</sup>

The inevitable result of such a conception was to confuse the Word itself and the "formulated Word," i.e., the Scriptures. Thus Polycarp considers the Scriptures the very voice of the Most High,<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria refers a saying of St. Paul's (I Cor. 3:2) to the Holy Spirit in the apostle "using mystically the voice of the Lord,"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted Smith, "Karl Barth on the Doctrine of the Inspiration of the Scriptures in the History of the Church," Scottish Journal of Theology, June, 1949, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Stewart, "Bible," H.D.B., Vol. I, p. 296a.

<sup>5</sup> Cited Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

and Irenaeus speaks of the Scriptures as "perfect, seeing that they are spoken by God's Word and his Spirit."<sup>7</sup>

Yet though the Old Testament was received as an infallible authority, it was not received as the ultimate authority. It was the Old Testament as interpreted from the point of view of the more authoritative apostolic 'paradosis' that was received by the early Church. This is shown most clearly in the method of allegory, taken over from the rabbinic tradition.<sup>8</sup> Although the application of such a method involved by assumption a concept of the text as authoritative and sacred in the highest degree, yet the point of interest for us here is that in the Christian Church it was to a large degree the interpretation of the more ultimately authoritative apostolic 'paradosis' into the text. It was this method that was used to reconcile the Old Testament with the apostolic 'paradosis.' The Old Testament was subjected to the 'norm' of the new Word in Christ as it was "formulated" in the word of the apostles.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT

We have seen in the previous chapter that the writings of the apostles were at first regarded as having just the authority of the words of the apostles, i.e., the authority of their writings was nothing other than the authority of the apostles themselves. Thus when St. Polycarp is asked to write to the Philippians "concerning righteousness," he deprecates the distinction thus bestowed upon him, referring them rather to the letter or letters which had been left by the blessed and glorious Paul.<sup>10</sup> Similarly Ignatius disclaimed the right to teach like the great apostles, recognizing that their words carry an authority other than his own.<sup>11</sup> "I do not enjoin you as Peter and Paul did," he says. "They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am a slave."<sup>12</sup>

But the process we see begun in this way in the marking off of the apostles' writings as the writings of the apostles soon led to their being marked off as the writings of Scripture. "By at least the end of

7 Ibid.

8 Cf. Sanday, Inspiration, p. 39, 79, Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, ch. 3.

9 Cf. Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 92-94

10 Sanday, op. cit., p. 362.

11 Robinson, Some Thoughts on Inspiration, p. 54.

12 Quoted Sanday, op. cit., p. 362.

the second century a body of writings embracing a majority of the present twenty-seven was being regarded in the Catholic Church as the New Testament and was being placed alongside the Jewish scriptures.<sup>13</sup> Sanday would make the date earlier, holding that already at the time of Irenaeus (c. 180 A.D.) they were accepted on the same footing as the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> It may have been even earlier than this, however for II Peter 3:16<sup>15</sup> placed Paul's epistles in the category of the "scriptures,"<sup>16</sup> and I Tim. 5:18<sup>17</sup> implies that already by the time of its being written the Gospel of Luke was accepted as Scripture (unless the saying quoted is from a lost apocryphal writing which both Jesus and the writer to Timothy quoted as such.)<sup>18</sup> We may therefore say that although until the fourth century the range of the New Testament canon was not always and everywhere the same, yet at least by the middle of the second century it was established that alongside of the Old Testament there was a second written authority of equal rank.<sup>19</sup> Thus to the writings which we know as the New Testament there came to be attributed the same complex of ideas about infallibility, inspiration and dictation discussed in the previous section. This was even further hardened in the attempt to find a rigidly absolute (infallible)

<sup>13</sup> Latourette, A History of Christianity, p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> Sanday, op cit., p. 366.

<sup>15</sup> II Peter and I Timothy are probably post-apostolic. According to A.E. Barnett II Peter is to be dated about "the middle of the second century" (ed. Buttrick, The Interpreter's Bible, Nashville, Abingdon, Vol. 12, p. 164). Salmon, Zahn, Plummer and Bigg, however, still contend for its Petrine authorship.

<sup>16</sup> Sanday, op cit., p. 384. See also Warfield, op cit., ch. 5, and especially p. 232 and 235 on this term which occurs with a plural signification here only in the New Testament.

<sup>17</sup> The Pastorals are dated anything from 61 to 180 A.D. Such scholars as J. Jeremias, W. Lock and J. Parry still contend for the Pauline authorship, but most scholars date them about 110 A.D. or later. F. Gealy suggests 130-150 A.D. (ed. Buttrick, The Interpreter's Bible, Nashville Abingdon, Vol. II, p. 368-370 and 374.)

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jn. 7:38, which may also be quoted from a lost apocryphal writing. But Warfield (Warfield, op cit., p. 163-165) and F.D. Gealy (The Interpreter's Bible, Nashville, Abingdon, Vol. II, p. 442 f.) think that the reference in I Tim. 5:8 is to Lk. 10:7. "It is striking that Jesus is not summoned to add the weight of His authority to the saying.... The conclusion is irresistible, in spite of certain objections, that he (the author of I Tim.) thought of the Gospel of Luke as Scripture." (Gealy).

<sup>19</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 107.

standard in the controversies of the early Church with Gnosticism.<sup>20</sup>

Again, however, as we have seen throughout our study so far, there was a polarity or tension in the understanding of the Scriptures, and this emerges especially in the treatment of the New Testament. On the one hand they were regarded as the infallibly authoritative utterance of God, so that Heracleon's commentary on John's Gospel, for instance, expounds the parts of the Gospel which are solely the work of the evangelist as being as authoritative as the actual words of Christ, making no distinction between them.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand Irenaeus and Tertullian recognise different degrees of inspiration in St. Paul, Tertullian, for one, setting down the "laxer" precepts concerning marriage in I Cor. as due to human prudence and the stricter to divine inspiration.<sup>22</sup> And Chrysostom explains the discrepancies in detail between the different Gospels as assuring us of the independence of the witnesses and not touching the facts of importance - as Gore says, "quite in the tone of a modern apologist."<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, a further very important point is that the early Church, in canonizing four Gospels, in abstaining from seeking uniformity in them, and in not hesitating to put two more or less representative apostles alongside two less well-known figures from the apostolic age, by implication was admitting the human (fallible) character of the Gospels and the fact that they were merely different (because human) "formulations" of the one divine Word, which though expressed through them was over and above them, not identical with them, and was the only ultimate authority.<sup>24</sup> The allegorical interpretation of the New Testament was by implication an acknowledgment of the same thing in so far as it was a reading of the Word

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Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 8.

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Sanday, op cit., p. 307. Heracleon was a Gnostic, but in this attitude to the text was merely exemplifying the typical attitude of the age. Cf. the previous section.

22

Sanday, op cit., p. 387.

23

Gore, "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration," ed. Gore, Lux Mundi, p. 358.

24

Cf. Cullmann's essay on "The Plurality of the Gospels as a Theological Problem in Antiquity," The Early Church, p. 39-54.

which came through the Scriptures into the Scriptures.<sup>25</sup>

### TRADITION

The problem of tradition is the most crucial in the sphere of authority in the age after the apostles. It is the problem of the relationship between the authority of Scripture and the authority of the 'living' tradition of the Church. In the previous two chapters we examined the existence and nature of what we called the apostolic 'paradosis', which was regarded as finally authoritative while the apostles lived. The question is now: Was the authority of the apostolic 'paradosis' regarded as continuing in the 'living' 'tradition' of the Church, or in the incarnation of that apostolic 'paradosis' in the writings of the New Testament?

<sup>26</sup>  
Cullmann contends that the concept of the function of the apostolate necessitated that the authority of the apostolic 'paradosis' be vested in its New Testament incarnation, and that the fixing of the canon by the post-apostolic Church was an acknowledgment that this was so, i.e., an acknowledgment that the 'tradition' of the Church had to subject itself to the authority of the New Testament writings in so far as they were the incarnation of the apostolic 'paradosis.'

The uniqueness of the apostolate is evident in the theological relationship between the apostolic period and "the period of the Church," as Cullmann calls it. In the Christian conception the "period of direct revelation" is central both to the totality of time and as the vantage-point from which the history of salvation, both previous and future, is to be regarded. This is the period from the birth of Christ to the

<sup>25</sup> The Word which came through the Scriptures rather than "what the Church is teaching" (C. Pepler, O.P., essay in ed. Dugmore, The Interpretation of the Bible, p. 46) was what was intended to be read in (to) the "formulated" Word~~s~~ in the early period at any rate.

<sup>26</sup> Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 75-99. This essay is also printed in The Scottish Journal of Theology, June, 1953, p. 113-135.

death of the last apostle. The period of the Church which follows this is "the intermediate period,"<sup>27</sup> because it is essentially the period between the absolute of the central period (the "period of direct revelation") and the absolute of the fulfilment (the Second Coming). That is why the New Testament attributes the same images as are applied to Jesus to the apostles, viz., "rocks," "foundations," "pillars." These images belong essentially to the apostles, never to "bishops" or "elders."<sup>28</sup> No writing of the New Testament stresses the continuation of the work of the Incarnation in the Church, and therefore in the "period of the Church," so much as the Fourth Gospel,<sup>29</sup> yet it is this very Gospel which makes clear the distinction between the apostles as the original bearers of the revelation of the Incarnation and those who receive the revelation from them.<sup>30</sup> It may also be for this reason that this Gospel reports a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles before that which takes place in Acts.<sup>31</sup> Further, there is all the evidence of the uniqueness of the apostolate which we have already discussed and cannot repeat here.<sup>32</sup> The conclusion therefore is that the apostle, as the primary and unique bearer of the revelation, cannot have any successor: he must continue to fulfil his function for future generations by his word,<sup>33</sup> by his own word, and therefore by his word as it is incarnate in his writings (or in the writings of those who have heard and taken down his word.)

The early Church acknowledged this by the creation of the New Testament, and by admitting to it only those writings it could guarantee as the records of the apostolic 'paradosis' or word, whether they were written by the apostles themselves or their immediate hearers. The post-apostolic Church thus preserved the apostolic writings as having the same

<sup>27</sup> Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 77.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Cullmann, Early Christian Worship (Studies in Biblical Theology No.10), London, S.C.M., 1953, in which he elaborates this as "the key to the understanding of the fourth Gospel."

<sup>30</sup> Jn. 17, especially verse 20.

<sup>31</sup> Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter II, section 'Peter, the Rock,' Chapter III, section 'The

<sup>33</sup> Jn. 17:20. Apostles.'

exclusive authority the word of the apostles had exercised in the apostolic Church.

Cullmann goes on to contend that the early Church thus made the finally normative authority the Bible. The Word of God itself which is addressed by the Holy Spirit, must be subjected to the norm of the apostolic 'paradosis' in the New Testament.<sup>34</sup> This is in reaction to the Roman Catholic position which subjects the Word of God to its 'tradition.' But "if the Bible itself is called the norm of systematic theology, nothing concrete is said, for the Bible is a collection of religious literature,"<sup>35</sup> which is far from being entirely consistent with itself, and which itself needs to be interpreted by a norm. It is not the Bible that is the norm of the Word of God, as Cullmann holds; it is the Word of God that is the norm of the Bible. This is exactly why "there is an element of indefiniteness in the composition of the biblical canon,"<sup>36</sup> as is shown by its history. The Roman Catholics are wrong in making the "formulation" of the Word in the Church's 'tradition' and doctrine the authoritative norm of the Word;<sup>37</sup> the biblicists<sup>38</sup> are wrong in making its "formulation" in the Bible the norm of the Word. The Word instead is the normative authority of the Bible, the tradition, and the doctrine. But the normatively authoritative Word must be the original Word, the Word addressed to (not as "formulated" by) the apostles. That is why the apostolic writings are so important, and that is why the New Testament was created in the early Church. For the Word cannot be "addressed" to man except through the "formulated" Word. If we may quote what was said in the Introduction, "the formulation of the Word is important because the Word is revealed only through correct doctrine," and the apostles were the commissioned "formulators" of the Word.

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See Cullmann, op. cit., p. 83, 87, 87ff. and passim.

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Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p. 56. For a criticism of Tillich's own understanding of the 'norm', however, see the Conclusion and the rest of this section.

36

Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p. 57.

37

Chapter VII.

38

Including Cullmann as well as the Fundamentalists, and Cullmann is an example of the neo-orthodox school.

Thus in the creation of the New Testament the early Church was accepting as the normative authority the Word which was addressed to the apostles, and which it "heard" through the "formulation" of that Word in the apostolic 'paradosis' which came to be incarnated in the New Testament. The early Church could "hear" the Word which was addressed to the apostles only through the apostles' formulation of it, i.e., the apostles' word. This was not to deny the value of later ecclesiastical tradition, but it was to subject it to the apostolic 'paradosis' as the interpretation of the Word which came through the primary "formulation" of it (the apostolic 'paradosis'). Thus in so far as the interpretation is a secondary formulation it is subjected to the more authoritative apostolic formulation, and therefore could be criticized by the ultimately authoritative norm of the Word which came through the apostolic formulation. But in so far as the decisions of the early Church, for instance, were 'interpretations' (interpretative formulations) of the Word (which came through the apostolic formulation) rather than 'interpretations' of the apostolic formulation itself, they are more than mere guides to the exegesis of the apostolic formulation.<sup>39</sup> They are formulations of the Word, and therefore are binding on all future generations of the Church,<sup>40</sup> subject to the condition that the Word they formulate was addressed by the Holy Spirit, i.e., subject to the council's being representative of the whole Church and "listening" to the Spirit in an attitude of humility, penitence and prayer.<sup>41</sup>

The understanding of the relationship between the transcendent Word, the apostolic 'paradosis', and the Church's tradition to which we have now advanced is one that overcomes, to a large extent, the

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As Cullmann maintains. Cf. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 85, 97.

<sup>40</sup>

Contrast Cullmann, op. cit., p. 85. Cullmann denies this on the grounds that the Church's formulations are interpretations "for its own period." But the apostolic formulation was itself an interpretation of the Word in the terms and thought forms of the apostles' own age.

<sup>41</sup>

See further the Conclusion (in conjunction with the Introduction).

conflict between the Roman and 'orthodox' Protestant attitudes. Following the Roman attitude we may say that the living voice is above the "dead" word of Scripture; but at the same time, following Protestantism, we may deny that it is the living voice of the Church that is above it. It is the living voice of God, the Word which He addresses, that is the ultimate authority. Moreover this solution is one that cuts between both the Roman and the Protestant theoretical attitudes towards the decisions of Church councils. Following Romanism we may affirm that the decisions of the early Church do have a binding value, but following Protestantism, that they cannot claim infallibility because they are binding only when the Holy Spirit "spoke" the 'Word' they formulated and it can never be proved in any specified case that He did so speak.<sup>42</sup>

This also tallies with what we know of the formation of the canon. The books of the future New Testament canon were forced on the Church by something intrinsic to them, viz., the Word which came through them. This is truer than to say either that they "forced themselves on the Church by their intrinsic apostolic authority"<sup>43</sup> (books cannot force themselves) or that the Church decided the canon (there was never a formal definition of the canon by the ecumenical Church)<sup>44,45</sup>. On the other hand the indefiniteness of the canon, to which we have referred, points to the same non-identification of the (transcendent) Word and the (human) "formulation" of it which we discussed in the Introduction: just as the writings of the Bible as "formulations" of the transcendent Word are fallible, so the canon itself as a "formulation" of the extent of the Word is indefinite.<sup>46</sup> It can ultimately neither define nor confine the transcendent Word.

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<sup>42</sup> See further the Conclusion.

<sup>43</sup> Cullmann, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> See Stewart, "Bible," H.D.B., Vol. I, p. 297a, Carpenter, "The Bible in the Early Church," ed. Dugmore, The Interpretation of the Bible, p. 3-8, Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 130.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 152.

<sup>46</sup> See further the Conclusion.

The setting up of the apostolic formulation as the "formulation" through which the Word came and comes reduced to the (inevitable) minimum the human element inherent in the very notion of the communication of a divine revelation to man. That minimum is inevitably involved in the (human) formulation of the Word. The fatality of not keeping it at this minimum is shown by Papias, (c. 150 A.D.) who although he tells us that he attaches more importance to the oral tradition than to the written writings, reports an oral tradition obviously completely legendary in character.<sup>47, 48</sup> The same danger is shown also by the apocryphal Gospels, the first of which come from the same period.<sup>49</sup>

What we have said about the relation between the apostolic 'paradosis' and the 'tradition' of the Church finds its confirmation in the evolution of patristics. The Church Fathers who wrote after 150 A.D. (e.g., Irenaeus, Tertullian), although chronologically more remote from the New Testament than the authors of the first half of the century (e.g., Clement, Barnabas, Hermas, Polycarp), understood infinitely better the essence of the gospel.<sup>50</sup> This is because the earlier writers were already too far from the apostolic age to be able to draw from direct eye-witness testimony but at the same time did not have the formulation of the normative (original) Word at their disposal, whereas the later Fathers did have this (correct) formulation, the construction of which had done away with all impure and deformed secondary sources of information.

But does not "the rule of faith" prove that ecclesiastical tradition is on an equal footing of authority with Scripture? No, for the idea of giving it primary authority was conceived at the same time as that of giving primary authority to the New Testament (about the middle of

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<sup>47</sup> Cullmann, op. cit., p. 89

<sup>48</sup> It is important to note why Papias preferred the oral tradition. It was because he would have contended that any scribe could re-write and alter a written tradition and so make it unreliable, whereas when the oral reciter of the Gospel was known as a good and honest man the 'tradition' he transmitted could be trusted because he would not change it. See the note on the 'huperepai,' Chapter II, section 'Tradition.'

<sup>49</sup> Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup> Cullmann, op. cit., p. 96.

the second century), and it was given that authority as a definitive summary of the apostolic 'paradosis' and as a text which the early Church believed to have been itself fixed in the period of the apostles.<sup>51</sup>

The early Church, as the primary Church to be faced by the problem, received the apostolic formulation of the Word which came to the apostles as the primary formulated authority by which all other formulations were to be tested. We may conclude, then, that the implication is that this must be so for the Church of all subsequent ages and that all later ecclesiastical tradition is secondary to this primary formulation in the New Testament.

#### THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

We saw in the previous chapter that the authority of the apostles dominated the Church to an exclusive extent while they were alive. Once they had died, however, the question of the authority of the ministry of the Church was raised in a more acute fashion. We have seen that this ministry subjected itself to the apostolic formulation of the Word even when the apostles themselves were no longer alive, in so far as that formulation had come to be incarnated in the New Testament. Under this formulation, then, what authority did the ministry of the Church come to have?

We saw that the New Testament picture of the 'ministry' of the Church is a fluid one. In Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians (c.96 A.D.) there is still no indication of a monepiscopacy, according to Williams, for he speaks in terms of a college of presbyters at Corinth.<sup>52</sup> Clement, writing on behalf of the Church at Rome, defends the validity of

<sup>51</sup> Latourette, A History of Christianity, p. 135f., Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 94ff.

<sup>52</sup> Williams, Authority in the Apostolic Age, p. 69f., 109; cf. Latourette, op. cit., p. 117.

the ministry of certain presbyters who had been removed from office by reference to the apostolic action that lay behind the appointment of some (apparently not all) of them and to the claim of the others to widespread acceptance and long service. Clement also compares the Christian ministry with the Old Testament dispensation, with its laymen, levites, priests and high priest<sup>53</sup> but it is the sense of order that prevailed in the old dispensation that he wishes to stress. He maintains that the apostles "knew . . . that there would be strife over the dignity of the bishop's office" and intended to provide a continuance of authority of some sort when they appointed bishops (i.e., presbyters?) and deacons.<sup>54</sup>

Ignatius, writing to the Smyrnaeans (c.112) presents a different picture. "Avoid divisions . . . follow the bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow the presbytery as the Apostles; and respect the deacons. . . . Let no man perform anything pertaining to the church without the bishop."<sup>55</sup> (It may be worth noting that no mention is made, however, of valid succession.)

The Didache<sup>56</sup> again, has no hint of the monarchical bishop, but speaks of prophets, teachers, bishops and deacons<sup>57</sup> among its readers, and as late as the writing of the 'Shepherd of Hermas'<sup>58</sup> the position of bishop was not sharply distinguished from that of the presbyters in the Church at Rome, according to Williams.<sup>59</sup> Here too there is no evidence of the appointment of "successors."

From all these writings three points emerge. Firstly, the main influence in the formation of the ministry seems to have been practical, pastoral, ad hoc considerations, as in the New Testament

<sup>53</sup> Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church, p. 88.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 89f.

<sup>56</sup> "The Didache has been variously dated from the first century to the fourth. The primitive character of its instructions and the existence of the 'prophets' point to an early date." (A.R. Whitham, The History of the Christian Church, London, Rivingtons, 1954, p. 62).

<sup>57</sup> Bettenson, op. cit., p. 90-93.

<sup>58</sup> Probably written about 150 A.D. "It has, however, been placed considerably earlier by some scholars." (Whitham, op. cit., p. 57f.)

<sup>59</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 73.

(e.g., in the appointment of the seven deacons in Acts). Secondly, from the days of the Twelve to the evolution of the monarchical bishop of Ignatius there were always leaders of varying grades, operating over varying areas. Thirdly, the ministry of the later New Testament (post-apostolic) days felt the need of apostolic authority and the preservation of the true apostolic witness, and began (?) to think, at least roughly, in terms of an historical succession of ministers in the Church.<sup>60</sup> (The first use of the technical term, "succession," occurs only in Hegesippus,<sup>61</sup> c. 175 ).

Irenaeus, writing about 180 A.D., reveals that the refutation of heretics (in which the problem of authority most acutely confronted the early Church) began with appeal to Scripture. When, however, the heretics refuted this appeal,

because the Scriptures, they say, contain diverse utterances, and because the truth cannot be found in them that know not the tradition. For that, they say, has been handed down not by means of writings but by means of the living voice..... And this wisdom each one of them claims to be that which he has found by himself,<sup>62</sup>

appeal was made to the 'tradition' "derived from the Apostles" which was "safeguarded in the churches through the succession of presbyters," on the grounds that "if the Apostles had known hidden mysteries which they taught the perfect in private and in secret, they would rather have committed them to those to whom they entrusted the churches."<sup>63</sup> And Irenaeus claims to be able to "enumerate those who were appointed bishops in the churches by the Apostles, and their successors (or successions) down to our own day."<sup>64</sup>

Tertullian later (c. 200) taught that the test of true doctrine was whether it "accords with those apostolic churches," which were founded

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Williams suggests that the Pastoral Epistles, for instance, were written to supply this need of apostolic authority by making a bridge between the apostles and the local elders, via the delegates. Cf. especially II Tim. 2:2. (Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 70, 73).

61 Bettenson, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*, p. 96 cf. p. 97f., Latourette, *op. cit.*, p. 131f.

by the apostles (who, in turn, were appointed by Christ) and which could claim authority on the ground of "unbroken succession from the beginning."<sup>65</sup> And by the time of Cyprian (c. 250) it was held that "if any one be not with the bishop he is not in the Church," which "is one and may not be rent or sundered, but should assuredly be bound together and united by the glue of the priests who are in harmony one with another."<sup>66</sup>

We see in these writings how, under the influence of polemic, a definite change of emphasis took place: at first the primary stress was laid on the material authority of the apostolic 'paradosis' - especially as it was incarnated in the New Testament (Irenaeus); then the primary stress came to be laid on the formal authority of the apostolic "successors" (Tertullian, who does not even mention the Scriptures in the passage from which we have quoted, but speaks instead of the apostolic churches as "the sources ... of the faith"<sup>67 68</sup>); and finally, when the possibility of disagreement between the apostolic successors began to emerge, the authority came to be regarded as belonging to the "successors" who were in agreement with one another, i.e., to the majority of an ecumenial council (Cyprian).<sup>69</sup>

Finally we may note that neither Tertullian nor Jerome thought the actual episcopal order was divinely founded or absolutely original in the Church. Tertullian asserted, "St. John was the founder of the episcopal order," Jerome that "in the first time the priesthood and the episcopate were one and the same thing, and before a diabolical instinct caused parties to arise ... the Churches were governed by the common council of the elders" and "so the bishops ... are superior to

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Ibid., p. 100.

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Ibid., p. 104.

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Ibid., p. 100.

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Cf. Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, p. 53.

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"The first of these gatherings, or synods, of which we have record, although we are not entirely clear that it was made up of bishops or only of bishops, was held in Asia Minor to deal with Montanism, i.e., "soon after 160. A.D." (Latourette, op. cit., p. 132. W. Walker, A History of the Christian Church, Edinburgh, T.&T. Clark, 1953, p.59. This is excepting the Jerusalem Council of course, but it was not a Council of "successors."

the priests through ecclesiastical custom and not through divine disposition."<sup>70</sup>

(THE BISHOP OF) ROME

Until the beginning of the third century it never occurred to a single Bishop of Rome to refer the saying in Mt. 16:17ff. to himself in the sense of leadership of the entire Church. Callistus (217-222) or Steganus (254-257) was the first to do so. And even then this did not pass without contradiction (including from Tertullian and Cyprian) and fell far short of general acceptance.<sup>71</sup> When Irenaeus defended the pre-eminency of Rome in the second century it did not occur to him that Mt. 16:17ff. might be relevant to this.<sup>72.</sup>

Moreover the outstanding ancient commentators who concerned themselves with Mt. 16:17ff. apart from the context of polemical church-politics considered other possibilities of interpretation. Chrysostom explained the rock on which Christ would build His Church as the faith of confession, and later Augustine thought that by the rock Jesus meant not Peter but Himself. Another example is Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis of the saying.<sup>73</sup>

It is true that as early as Clement's letter to the Corinthians (c. 96) we find the definite implication of the right of Rome to intervene and decide in the affairs of other churches. Clement's words,<sup>74</sup> especially the sentence, "If any man should be disobedient unto the words spoken by God through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no slight transgression,"<sup>75</sup> hardly allow the description of his letter as a mere exhortation to a sister church which

<sup>70</sup> G. Bartoli, The Primitive Church and the Primacy of Rome, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, p. 205f.

<sup>71</sup> Cullmann, Peter, Disciple - Apostle - Martyr, p. 234.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., cf. Bettenson, op. cit., p. 96ff.

<sup>73</sup> Cullmann, Peter, Disciple - Apostle - Martyr, p. 161f.

<sup>74</sup> For a summary of Clement's letter see Chapman, "Clement I, Saint, Pope," C.E., Vol. 1v.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted Joyce, "Pope, The," C.E., Vol. X11, p. 263a.

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Cullmann gives. But this does not necessarily mean that it is the power of the Bishop of Rome as successor to Peter that is involved. The letter is written "from the Church of Rome." Authority is not claimed for the Bishop of Rome; and it might be argued that if the Bishop's power was the essential power involved some reference must have been made in the letter to the transmission of power from Peter to his "successor," especially as it seems that this would have been the first occasion for the assertion of such power. In fact the letter is neither prefaced by nor contains any reference to the author's name. It is only from later tradition that we learn that it was written by Clement.

Ignatius in his letter to the church at Rome (c. 107) addresses it as "presiding over the brotherhood of love;"<sup>77</sup> but, we note, it is the church at Rome, and not the bishop, which he addresses as "presiding."

The tradition that the original Bishop of Rome was St. Peter goes back only as far as Irenaeus (c. 180) in the extant documents. He speaks of Hyginus as ninth Bishop of Rome, which would make Peter the first, according to Joyce<sup>78</sup> (there are some texts which read "eighth" instead of "ninth" however), and mentions that the apostles Peter and Paul handed over to Linus the office of bishop, after they had "founded and set up" the church at Rome.<sup>79</sup> About 220 Tertullian reported the claim of Callistus to Peter's special power to forgive sins, and a poem, "Adversus Marcionem," of roughly the same time says that Peter passed on to Linus "the chair on which he himself had sat." Cyprian (c. 250) mentions that Stephen (254-257) had claimed to decide the controversy regarding re-baptism on the ground that he held the succession from Peter,

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<sup>76</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>77</sup>Joyce, op. cit., p. 263a.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 262b.

<sup>79</sup>Bettenson, op. cit., p. 97. Note that the statement that Rome was founded by Peter and Paul is incorrect: there was a church at Rome before either apostle went there. Cf. Ac. 18:21, Ro. 1:8, Cullmann, op. cit., p. 37ff on Ac. 12:17.

and speaks of Cornelius as succeeding to "the place of Fabian which is  
<sup>80</sup>the place of Peter." Similarly the tradition that those who succeeded  
 Peter as bishop succeeded him also in supreme headship of the Catholic  
 Church goes back only as far as Irenaeus, who persuaded Victor (189-198)  
 to withdraw a penalty of excommunication against the churches of Asia  
<sup>81</sup>Minor without imputing his right to impose it. All this, however,  
 could be the reading back into the first century of the institution as it  
 existed before the close of the second century.

There is evidence that the elaborate lists of Roman bishops  
 involved such a reading back. When he wrote to the Corinthians<sup>82</sup> Clement  
 may have been only the chief of a group of presbyters in Rome, and not a  
 bishop in "succession" as the later Church came to think of him. Ter-  
 tullian wrote that Clement (who is third after Peter in most of the lists)  
 was the immediate successor of Peter, ordained by him, and the Catholic  
 Encyclopaedia itself states that "the early evidence shows great variety"  
<sup>82</sup>in the listing of the early popes. Could anything witness more conclu-  
 sively to the lack of a definite ordination by Peter of any successor to  
 himself in his singular capacity as this lapse in the memory of the Church?  
 Surely such an event, and with it the "successor" involved would have been  
 remembered distinctly, had it ever occurred! (This is not to deny that  
 Peter may have ordained any leaders in the Roman church, including perhaps  
 both Linus and Clement, but it does deny that he ordained anyone as  
 successor to himself as the 'Rock' on which the church was to be founded.)  
 Moreover the remark that Peter and Paul handed over the episcopate to  
 Linus, which we find in Irenaeus and others, is a recognition that Peter

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<sup>80</sup> These are all cited by Joyce, op. cit., p. 262b.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 263b.

<sup>82</sup> Chapman, "Clement I, Saint, Pope," C.E., Vol. 1V, p. 13a.

did not enjoy complete and exclusive headship of the whole Church after  
<sup>83</sup>  
 all.

It was only at the Council of Sardica in 343 that a formal  
 decision was made to regard the Bishop of Rome as the final court of  
<sup>84</sup>  
 appeal in any dispute, and, according to Bettenson, its canons seem to  
 have won general acceptance only in the sixth century because the Eastern  
 and African bishops were not present at it, and the Synod of Carthage in  
 424 apparently denied that Rome's bishop was in any way superior to other  
<sup>85</sup>  
 metropolitan bishops. Later the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, gave a  
 parallel and equal authority to "the most holy throne of New Rome," i.e.,  
<sup>86</sup>  
 Constantinople.

The whole case for the succession of a supreme headship from  
 Peter to the bishops of Rome is undermined if our conclusions about James'  
 succeeding to that headship in chapter III are correct. Not only did  
 that conclusion fit all the New Testament evidence exactly, but also the  
 memory of it was retained in the ancient traditions of Jewish Christianity.  
<sup>87</sup>  
 Hegesippus, a Christian Hebrew of Palestine, wrote about 160 A.D. that  
 "the charge of the Church after the Ascension devolved on James the  
 brother of the Lord in concert with the apostles."<sup>88</sup> The Pseudo-  
<sup>89</sup>  
 Clementia, productions of the Judaic-Gnostic school, which are friendly  
 to Peter, clearly subordinate Peter to James, who is called "Bishop of  
 Bishops," "leader of the holy church of the Hebrews and of the churches  
founded everywhere by God's providence." Peter's commission to Clement

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter III, section 'Peter, the Rock.'

<sup>84</sup> Bettenson, *op. cit.*, p. 112f.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115f. Joyce, however, denies this interpretation of the  
 letter from Carthage. (Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 268.)

<sup>86</sup> Bettenson, *op. cit.*, p. 116f. The two canons in which this was con-  
 tained were later denounced by the Pope.

<sup>87</sup> A.R. Whitham, *The History of the Christian Church*, London, Rivingtons,  
 1954, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Mayor, "James," *H.D.B.*, Vol. II, p. 542.

<sup>89</sup> According to Whitham, *op. cit.*, p. 108. Cf. Mayor who dates them as  
 written early in the third century (Mayor, *op. cit.*, p. 543a), and  
 Chapman who dates them as late as 350 A.D., attributing them to Arian  
 origin, which, however, seems unlikely (Chapman, "Clementines," *C.E.*  
 Vol. 1V.).

is traced back to a commission that James gave to Peter,<sup>90</sup> and Peter is said to have an order from James to transmit to him all accounts of his teaching.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Clement of Alexandria (c. 200) who, though he stresses Peter's special position among the disciples, says that Peter, James and John renounced the pre-eminent position after the ascension of Jesus, and chose James the Just as Bishop of Jerusalem. ("Here, however, the fact is obscured that Peter had the leadership in the earliest period").<sup>92</sup>

The importance of these traditions is emphasized by the fact that they were held in spite of the conception of the popes' inheriting supreme succession from Peter which the Church came later generally to hold. The fact that from the first century the Roman Church played effectively an outstanding and leading role in Christendom and gradually attained a completely pre-eminent position in the following centuries can be explained in that Rome was the chief city of the Roman Empire, so that the Christian Church there naturally attained a special dignity.

This was to be expected. Being in the capital and chief city of the Empire, if it were at all strong it would naturally be regarded with deference by a religious community which was found principally within that Empire.<sup>93</sup>

That this is so is apparent from the fact that Paul already considered it so important that it became his ambition to visit the Roman Church<sup>94</sup> and, more important, in that he felt it advisable to precede his visit by the most carefully thought-out and deliberately-written letter we have from him. Its prestige would be enhanced later by the presence of both the outstanding member of the original Twelve Apostles and the head of the Gentile mission together, and still more by the martyrdom there of them both.

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<sup>90</sup>  
Cullmann, op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>91</sup>  
Chapman, "Clementines," C.E., Vol. IV.

<sup>92</sup>  
Cullmann, op. cit., p. 225n. Italics original.

<sup>93</sup>  
Latourette, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>94</sup>  
Ac. 19:21.

All this is not to deny that the process by which the Roman Church attained a special dignity and became the leader of Christendom was ultimately a divinely intended development. But it does deny that the papacy at Rome inherited the status of Peter which Jesus gave him as leader of the apostles in Mt. 16:17-19 etc. It also denies of course that it inherited infallibility by this means. In fact, as the Catholic Encyclopaedia itself says, "during the early centuries, there was no explicit and formal discussion regarding ecclesiastical infallibility as such."<sup>95</sup> This fact is important, for even if it were true that the apostle did institute the primacy of Rome that does not mean that it thereby became infallible. Had the papacy been infallible there would have been no need for all the books written and the synods summoned against heretics. Instead the unfailing recourse would have been an appeal to the infallible utterance of the Pope, "and the oracle at Rome would have been interrogated more than was of old the oracle at Delphi."<sup>96</sup>

It was quite natural, and in a way inevitable, that on the one hand the Church should seek an infallible norm or authority in its ministry, and above all in the leading figure in that ministry, as a result of its controversies with the early heresies (just as on the other hand it sought an infallible material norm in the Scriptures) and should find evidence to support this theory even at the cost of reading it back into the origins of the ministry at Rome and generally. Its appeal to the ministry that stood in succession to those ordained by the apostles was a valid one, just as its appeal to the Scriptures was valid, but in seeking for absolute certainty the Church began to make the mistake of attributing ultimate, i.e. absolute or infallible, authority to these two, whereas the truth is that there is only one ultimate and absolute

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Toner, "Infallibility," C.E., Vol. VII, p. 793a. Italics mine.

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Hase, quoted Paterson, The Rule of Faith, p. 50.

authority, the Spirit of God addressing the Word through the non-ultimate, and therefore fallible, formal, and material authorities of the ministry and Scripture, which become identical with the ultimate authority only when that Word is addressed and heard through them.

#### REASON

From the immediate revelation there always arise the questions of its implications. For one thing the Christian meets the prevailing philosophical outlook of his time and he has to answer the question, How does the Christian revelation tally with (or criticize) this? That is what happened in the post-apostolic Church, and it is therefore that we find the emergence of a theology which recognized its dependence on Reason.

Already in the apostolic age itself the question of the implications of the revelation in Christ had arisen. But when Paul and John interpreted the facts of the faith and their implications they claimed that their interpretations were themselves inspired revelation. Thus the question of the authority of reason did not really arise, at least in theory, until the post-apostolic age.

The universal feature of theology in the early centuries of Christianity was its piecemeal character. It was not a comprehensive systematic theology, but a partial, an *ad hoc*<sup>97</sup> theology summoned into existence by the particular problems at hand. The result was that reason in practice played an interpretative rather than an authoritative role.

As far as theorizing about reason went we find the beginnings of both the extreme attitudes towards reason which have existed in Christianity, culminating on the one hand in St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Luther, and on the other in Abelard and the deists of the Enlightenment. Tertullian denigrated human reason, passionately rejecting Greek philosophical thinking as the bridal gift of the fallen angels to the daughters of men. But he did not adopt this attitude consistently.<sup>98</sup> On the other

<sup>97</sup> Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

<sup>98</sup> Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p. 228 and 228n.

side Justin Martyr was willing to allow that a saving knowledge of God was possible through natural philosophy, and later his successor, Clement of Alexandria, regarded Greek philosophy along with the Old Testament revelation as a 'praeparatio evangelica.'<sup>99</sup> But Justin's own search for ultimate truth in the teachings of Stoicism, Peripateticism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism, in turn, before he became a Christian, belied his theory.<sup>100</sup>

However there was also a central, more traditional attitude, which was that "a rational understanding of the world and its purpose is attainable by men, but only through the guidance of divine revelation," that "without Christian faith philosophy might conceivably approximate to truth, but could not know that it did so."<sup>101</sup> This eventually found a definitive and masterful expression in the Augustinian dictum 'credo ut intellegam.'<sup>102</sup>

#### THE ATTESTATION OF 'DUNAMIS'

Even in the New Testament itself there seems to be a falling off of the miraculous element by the time the Pastoral and the Johannine Epistles and the Apocalypse came to be written. And when we come to the post-apostolic age proper we find little evidence of 'dynamic' happenings that could be termed miraculous. As late as Tertullian exorcism is regarded as common in the Church, but by the fourth century Chrysostom implies that really great miracles are things of the past - and even as early as Origen and Tertullian (and Justin) this seems to be the attitude.<sup>103</sup> In fact already in the Didache we see what we may perhaps regard as the resolving of the attestation of 'dunamis' into a series of doctrinal and 'ethical tests of integrity; and with the doctrinal comes the all-important stress on 'tradition.'<sup>104</sup> And Irenaeus apparently equates the attestation of the 'dunamis' with that of the apostolic succession, for he writes,

Where the charismata of the Lord are given, there must we seek the truth, i.e. with those to whom belongs the ecclesiastical succession from the Apostles, and the unadulterated and incorruptible word. It is they who ... securely expound ..."<sup>105</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 228f.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>103</sup> Williams, Authority in the Apostolic Age, p. 88.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Bettenson, op. cit., p. 90-93.

<sup>105</sup> Toner, op. cit., p. 793b. Quoted from the 'Adversus haereses.'

## CHAPTER V

### AUTHORITY IN THE MEDIEVAL AGES

#### THE TRADITION AND THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

By the Medieval Ages the conception was that Christ had left a deposit of faith of which part was taken over with His explicit approval from the existing Jewish Church and part revealed by Him to His apostles and other hearers during His earthly life and especially during the forty days after His Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> He was believed to have committed the task of preserving the deposit to the twelve apostles and to their successors, the bishops, as depositaries. His promises in Mt.16:17ff. and the various other passages which we have already discussed were interpreted as guaranteeing their 'infallibility' as the interpreting and defining authorities of the authentic content of the deposit. (The doctrine of papal infallibility itself was implicit in some of the statements of the later Middle Ages and St. Bernard wrote of Rome as "the place where the faith cannot fail").<sup>2</sup>

True, individual bishops might have erred and might err, but the promises of Jesus had been to them as a group and above all to the Roman bishop and a majority of bishops in communion with the Roman bishop could not err. "The teaching of the Church" was thus infallible. Aquinas, for instance, could quote a Father in his Summa Theologica as authoritative enough to settle the question at issue, but at the same time did not regard them as individually infallible for he acknowledged sometimes that some things in the patristic writings contradicted the teaching of the Church, and then it was always the teaching of the Church that was authoritative. But this is exceptional, and even when he quoted from the tradition as apparently supporting the 'objections' to his theses his reply to the quotation was to explain rather than contradict it.

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, "Tradition," E.R.E., Vol.XII, p.412a. Cf. Acts 1:3.

<sup>2</sup>The Vatican Council, De Ecclesia Christi, cap.iv (Father Prime's translation).

Nevertheless it was disagreement among the bishops that had contributed another characteristic apparatus for safeguarding the deposit which existed in the Middle Ages. In the second and third centuries, we saw in the previous chapter, it had been possible for Hippolytus, Irenaeus, and Tertullian in writing against the Gnostics to appeal to the unanimous consent of the "successions" of bishops as proof of the authenticity of the Church's 'tradition.' But later the bishops themselves had begun to disagree concerning the content of the faith. These disagreements were resolved by summoning councils representing, in theory or in fact, the whole body of the chief depositaries, i.e., the whole episcopate. The first of these ecumenical councils was held in the fourth century,<sup>3</sup> and by the time of the Middle Ages they were a normal means of settling disputes.<sup>4</sup> Their object was not so much to discover fresh truth as to determine what the doctrine was which had been believed in the Church from the beginning. Because it was usually impossible to attain complete unanimity the principle was adopted that an overwhelming majority of the depositaries, especially if it included the occupants of one or more of the great apostolic sees, had the same authority as the whole body, and small minority bodies which refused to submit were declared schismatic. However, we note, "it is true that most of the so-called ecumenical councils were not actually representative of the total episcopate of the world. They became ecumenical in virtue of their acceptance, immediate or gradual, by the majority of bishops."<sup>5</sup>

In the late Middle Ages it was held that the teaching of the Church was identical with the teaching of the Scriptures. Aquinas spoke interchangeably of the content of revelation as the teaching of Scripture<sup>6</sup> and as whatever the Church taught.<sup>7</sup> Tradition and Scripture were accepted

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<sup>3</sup>We have already noted that the first synod of bishops in the history of the Church was held in Asia Minor to combat Montanism. But this was not a council of the whole Church.

<sup>4</sup>See our comments on the Council of Jerusalem in chapter III, section 'The Ministry of the Church.'

<sup>5</sup>Williams, *op. cit.*, p.413a.

<sup>6</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.1,vii, 2 and ad 3.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, II (2).5,iii and 10,xii. See Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p.195.

as equal authorities.<sup>8</sup> The canon had been generated by the living force of the tradition as part of the means by which it was to be preserved and perpetuated. True, Aquinas said that "the sole rule of faith is the canonical Scriptures,"<sup>9</sup> but this was because he made no distinction between the teaching of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. While he established the authority of the Scriptures in his works he assumed the authority of the Church - not because the Scriptures can be understood only from the existential viewpoint of the Church but because it was assumed that the teaching of the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church were identical. Already the sentiment was apparent which later culminated in the decree of Leo XIII that as God is the author of both Scripture and tradition it is impossible for them to conflict.<sup>10</sup> And, because of this identification, the Bible, seeing that it was now not above the tradition in authority, was no more the judge of tradition, and actually fell into the background in the late Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup> "Its authority was not so much disputed as ignored." In practice it became more and more subordinated to tradition as embodied in the Church. What had contributed largely towards this was the allegorical method of Biblical exposition which had become a rank growth by the time of the Middle Ages and which made it impossible to maintain the Bible text as normative, as compared with the ecclesiastical development of doctrine. With allegorical exposition the Scholastics could "prove" all that they wished to prove.<sup>12</sup>

#### REVELATION AND REASON

We saw in the Introduction that Aquinas's fundamental conception of the contributions of revelation and reason in theology was that they were in the form of doctrinal propositions. In the Medieval Age the general

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.108.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted C. Pepler, O.P., "The Faith of the Middle Ages," ed. Dugmore, The Interpretation of the Bible, p.43.

<sup>10</sup> Leo XIII, Providentissimus Deus, cap.v.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, op. cit., p.296b.

<sup>12</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.108. Cf. Pepler, "The Faith of the Middle Ages" ed. Dugmore, The Interpretation of the Bible, p.46. The Medieval fourfold sense of Scripture is expounded in Aquinas, op. cit., I.1,X.

assumption was a universal rationality, i.e., that everything that could be known was expressible in a proposition in logical relation to all other propositions. Thus all knowledge was attributed propositional form, that which came through revelation as well as that which came through reason.<sup>13</sup> Aquinas thus quotes texts of Scripture as authoritative propositions in his theses, "objections," and "replies".

The problem of authority therefore resolved itself for Aquinas into the problem of the co-ordination of the propositions of natural theology given by reason with the propositions given by revelation. His solution to this problem is known as "the Medieval Synthesis." It was a synthesis in that it brought together two different aspects or elements (two different branches of knowledge).

Traditional Greek thought had distinguished between the knowledge acquired from rational philosophical thought and that acquired from mythology. "Rational philosophical thought and mythology were regarded as parallel sources (either rival or complementary) of human knowledge."<sup>14</sup> Not however that the rational philosophical thought had excluded thinking about God. On the contrary the name "theology" comes from the Greek idea of a rational, philosophical "science of God." Aristotle tried to work out a theology or science of God on the basis of rational speculation on that area of reality which has the quality of divinity. The Christian philosophical thinkers inherited this formal understanding of the two types of knowledge, but substituted for mythology the historical Biblical revelation (and along with it the partial, 'ad hoc' theology of the early Church). The basic difference between the two sources was that the one supplied propositions which were rationally coherent and intelligible, the other propositions which were

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<sup>13</sup>Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

<sup>14</sup>Podgson, op. cit., p.20.

accepted on faith as distinct from reason.

Later, in the West authority and blind obedience were stressed to such an extent that reason was given no real place. The typical attitude of the West was that "the truth or doctrine is to be believed because defined, delivered, and authenticated by the Church"<sup>15</sup>. Then, through the rise of Scholasticism, which began in the eighth century and received great impetus from the rediscovery of Aristotle's works in the West, the claim of reason was once more heard, and the merit of Aquinas's system is that it recognized the claim of both reason and revelation in trying to correlate them in a "synthesis."

Aquinas's solution of the problem of the interrelationship of revelation and reason was to make them the principles of gaining knowledge in different, not opposing but complementary, areas. According to his system, reason can go so far in its search for truth. It can discover that God exists, for instance. By it "we can be led...so far as to know of God whether He exists, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things," and to know what the relationship of creatures is to Him in so far as He is "the cause of them all" and "super-<sup>16</sup>exceeds them all." But after that we must rely upon revelation. Revelation proceeds to give us the doctrines of the Trinity - "that God is Three and One"<sup>17</sup> - of the Incarnation, of redemption through Christ, etc. Truths given through revelation thus completed, and were added to the basis<sup>18</sup> "built up" by the unaided reason in what it could discover for itself.

Aquinas' "synthesis" is thus a noble and impressive system of truth in which reason and revelation are brought together in an harmonious alliance. It is not quite accurate to speak without qualification of reason and

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<sup>15</sup>Fairburn, quoted Robinson, Notes on The Definition and Scope of Theology.

<sup>16</sup>Aquinas, op. cit., p.12,xii.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., I.12,xiii ad 1; cf. I.32,i and II(2).1,vi.

<sup>18</sup>Aquinas, op. cit., I.1,i. Natural truths were not self-evident to natural reason, but had to be "demonstrated" by it (cf. Ibid., I.2,i-iii).

revelation as governing different parts of a single kingdom as if they were principles which had no contact with each other at all. Reason can be used to demolish obstacles which would hinder the acceptance of revelation, and reason must convince itself that the authority of the revelation on the grounds of which truths of revelation are received is a good one - "that the proffered revelation is authentic and really comes from God"<sup>19</sup> - and can even point to considerations regarding the content of revelation which would prepare the way for its reception. Further, "though reason should be prepared to accept on well-established authority much that goes beyond its own power to discover, it should never accept anything contrary to what it can itself discover."<sup>20</sup> Once revelation has arrived on the scene reason does not leave the scene, for revelation is given to reason and 'revealed theology' itself requires reason to organize these truths.

Moreover, the Bible itself includes side by side with truths which cannot be reached by reason truths which can. In other words the content of revelation includes natural truths. For, St Thomas says,

even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors....<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, although reason and revelation are principles which do have such contact with each other, each has an exclusive authority in a different sphere. Once the authority of revelation has been shown credible by reason, revelation becomes the exclusive authority in the sphere of revealed truths; and though the revelation may include natural truths reason still remains the final authority in the sphere of natural truths, and must test the revelation by testing the natural truths it includes. 'Reveal-

<sup>19</sup> Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, p.112.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Aquinas, op. cit., I.44,ii.

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, op. cit., I.1,i. Cf. I.12,xiii and also Baillie, op. cit., p.114f., Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.246.

ed truths' themselves are beyond reason and therefore cannot be either contrary to reason or supported by it. Thus we see that according to the principles of Aquinas' system the problem of authority as far as reason and revelation are concerned is resolved by limiting the claims of reason to the area of 'natural truths' (where it was also unlikely that the natural truths included in revelation should oppose reason), and making revelation the exclusive authority in the area of 'revealed truths' (which were beyond reason). Thus, far from there being any conflict between the authority of reason and revelation, they were precluded from such conflict by each being given a separate area of exclusive authority.

As far as criticism of Aquinas' solution goes, we have already<sup>23</sup> discussed the inadequacy of the concept of revelation on which it is based. Once the understanding of the content of revelation as consisting of propositions is no longer granted, Aquinas' organization of those propositions into different spheres in which reason and revelation are respectively exclusive authorities breaks down. Secondly, the conception of 'natural theology' itself has broken down in modern thought, largely through the questioning of the traditional 'proofs' of God by Kant.<sup>24</sup> Thirdly, by saying that faith supplements reason Aquinas was losing the insight of his master, Augustine, that faith conditions reason, that faith is an existential viewpoint (to use modern terminology) from which reason proceeds, rather<sup>25</sup> than something which adds to reason.

By handing over to reason apart from revelation an important area of our total knowledge of the world and God, St Thomas had taken the first step towards the deism of a later century which "yielded up to reason the whole sphere of man's possible knowledge of God and made revelation only

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<sup>23</sup>In the Introduction.

<sup>24</sup>See further Baillie, op. cit., chapters 1 and 3 regarding natural theology, and Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.227-233 regarding the 'proofs' of God.

<sup>25</sup>Richardson, op. cit., p.233-249, and for a discussion of the relationship between the speculation of the 'natural' reason and that of reason enlightened by grace see Fodgson, op. cit., p.21ff.

a 'republication' of the truths of natural religion"<sup>26</sup>

THE ATTESTATION OF THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

In Summa contra Gentiles Aquinas in arguing with unbelievers appears to claim that the authentication of Scripture, or rather, the authentication of the authority of the Christian revelation as we would express it for the purposes of this thesis, possesses in itself full logical cogency such as to compel belief in all reasonable minds, according to Baillie. But elsewhere when he is discussing with his fellow-Christians the nature of faith he speaks of faith as not merely of the intellect but also of the will, as in fact a supernatural virtue attainable only by means of a direct infusion of divine grace.<sup>27</sup> "That the minds of mortal beings should assent to such things," he went so far as to say, "is both the greatest of miracles and the evident work of divine inspiration."<sup>28</sup> This means that in addition to the external proofs by which the authority of the revelation is attested there is also a direct interior persuasion of its truth by the grace of God in the heart of the believer.<sup>29</sup> "Here St. Thomas approaches very near to the Reformation doctrine of the testimonium internum spiritus sancti."<sup>30</sup>

This does not seem however, to be consistent with his understanding of the role of reason in authenticating the authority of revelation. Nor does it seem consistent with the way in which he understands faith to be a knowledge inferior to that given by reason.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it does show that there was another side to Aquinas.

<sup>26</sup>Richardson, op. cit., p.245n.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Hodgson, op. cit., Appendix I, Richardson, op. cit., p.215.

<sup>28</sup>Aquinas, Contra Gentiles, Bk. I, Chapter 6, quoted Richardson, op. cit., p.214f.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Aquinas. Summa Theologica, I.1,iv; I.84,v; I.79,ix.

<sup>30</sup>Baillie, op. cit., p.113f. Cf. Richardson, op. cit., p.213f.

<sup>31</sup>Aquinas, op. cit., I.12,13 ad 3. Cf. also Baillie, op. cit., p.116ff., Hodgson, op. cit., p.200ff.

## CHAPTER VI

## AUTHORITY IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION

LUTHER

Luther's fundamental conviction was that he had been justified by God through faith alone, according to Romans 1:17-18. From this it followed that his salvation was wholly and entirely the work of God, that it was the immediate work of God (not something the Church did on behalf of God), and that it had come to him through the Bible. He had searched for the way to peace with God in the teachings of the Church and had only been led into thicker darkness of soul. But in the Scriptures he had found that peace, or rather it had found him. This made him see the immense contrast between the doctrine of the New Testament and the doctrine of the Roman Church,<sup>1</sup> and when he later had to choose between them he found that the Word of God in Scripture had inevitably already become for him the supreme authority in the things of salvation.

Luther, therefore, began to oppose the current TEACHING OF THE CHURCH because it seemed to him to have substituted "human teaching" for "God's Word" by saying with the Schoolmen that man could earn God's favour and salvation by good works,<sup>2</sup> and by building its theology on the foundation of the theories of Aristotle.<sup>3</sup>

At first Luther did not see that there was implied in his assertion of the supreme authority of the Scriptures any contradiction of the authority of THE POPE. Tetzel seems to have been the first to see this when he asserted against Luther's theses that "the authority

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>This charge was not accurate without qualification, for they did speak of 'unmerited grace' on the whole. But they laid stress on the duty to do what one could to obtain this grace, and even St. Thomas, who protested against this, held that full salvation was obtained, after justification, by good works (Davies, The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers, p. 18). Luther, as an Augustinian, was an opponent of Scholasticism.

<sup>3</sup>"Aristotle is so in vogue that there is scarcely time in the churches to interpret the gospel" (Erasmus, quoted by R. Bainton, Here I Stand, London, Hodder and Staughton, 1951).

of the Pope is supreme in the Church," that he alone "interprets authoritatively the meaning of Sacred Scripture in accordance with his own understanding," and that he "can scarcely err in matters of faith;"<sup>4</sup> but Luther himself claimed to have been astounded when it was asserted to him by the Papal Legate<sup>5</sup> that the authority of the Pope was "above a Council, Scripture, and everything in the Church."<sup>6</sup> Apparently he had not realized the full extent of the papal claim until that moment. But when he did he vehemently denied that the authority of the Pope was above either that of Council or Scripture. He later attacked the claim that no one has the right to interpret Scripture except the Pope, as something the Pope had erected as a wall to protect himself. He claimed that the Scriptures did not need to be interpreted by the Pope for they were perfectly plain in meaning, and that even a layman might have greater authority in matters of faith if he were a Christian and the Pope not. This was his doctrine of PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

The disputation at Leipzig showed Luther that his concept of the authority of Scripture involved the denial of the authority of the GENERAL COUNCILS as it was understood in the Western Church of his day. For him the sole function of a Council was to reaffirm the doctrines set forth in Scripture. He therefore proposed to test the pronouncements of Councils as well as of Pope with Scripture. In his de Captivitate Babylonica he argued that although it is true that the Church is able to distinguish the word of God from the word of man yet it is impossible on that account to say in any given instance that the Church has spoken, for those claiming to be the Church may not be the Church at all, as the example of the Council of Constance proved.<sup>7</sup>

Luther, therefore, assumed that THE WORD OF GOD in Scripture was the necessary and sufficient ground for any doctrine. This was the one and only supreme authority, the touchstone of all that claimed to

<sup>4</sup>Quoted Davies, op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>Cardinal Cajetan. The occasion was his interview with Luther in October 1518 which was ordered by the Pope in order that Luther might recant his ninety-five theses published the previous November. Cf. Lindsay, History of the Reformation, Vol. 1, p.232f., Bainton, op. cit., p. 93ff.

<sup>6</sup>Luther's account of the interview, quoted Davies, op. cit., p.23.

<sup>7</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.27.

be Christian. His attack on all the other authorities of tradition, the teaching of the Church, the Pope, and the General Councils was made only because as they were formulated in his day they could not be reconciled with what was to him the unique authority of Scripture.

Luther's doctrine of the Word of God is extremely important, not only because it meant a return to the apostolic and post-apostolic emphasis on the supreme authority of the 'paradosis' of the apostles (as it was incarnated in Scripture),<sup>8</sup> but also because "Luther was the first to represent a Biblical faith which could be combined with Biblical criticism."<sup>9</sup> Yet here too, as in much of his theology, Luther reveals conflicting tendencies which are finally not to be reconciled.

In the first of the two conflicting trends in Luther's doctrine of the Word of God we note that at first Luther made no distinction between the Word of God and the Scriptures,<sup>10</sup> concerning which he said we must "accept, believe, yield to and humbly submit our understanding to every single word, whoever speaks it, as if God himself were speaking it."<sup>11</sup> But as we have seen, his whole idea of the supreme authority of Scripture had resulted from his experience of the gospel of justification by faith which he opposed to the teaching of the Scholastics. Thus in his study of the Bible Luther looked constantly for this gospel, and although it did not worry him when he did not find it in the Old Testament, as that he knew to have been the 'paidagogos' leading to the gospel, its absence from any book of the New Testament profoundly shocked him. It is this that accounts for the furious scorn he vented upon the Epistle of James. He felt himself faced with a profound dilemma and followed the only way out: he set up within the New Testament a criterion by which the claim of any book to be part of the Word of God

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<sup>8</sup>See Chapters 11 and 111.

<sup>9</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God (Dogmatics Vol.1), p.111.

<sup>10</sup>Davies, op. cit., p. 31f.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted from Luther's Römerbriefvorlesung which he wrote (not long) before his posting of the ninety-five theses (Davies, op. cit., p.20).

was to be tested, the criterion of whether or not it "preached Christ," which meant for him whether or not it preached the gospel of justification by faith.<sup>12</sup> Thus his ultimate norm came to be 'justification by faith,' and on the grounds of this norm he condemned the Epistle of James as having been written "by some Jew who had heard of the Christians but not joined them." "Let us banish this epistle from the university," he said, "for it is useless."<sup>13</sup> Having said this he did not hesitate to go on to impugn Hebrews<sup>14</sup> and Revelation<sup>15</sup> as books which obscured the gospel, and also Jude as being unnecessary in the canon in so far as it was merely an abridged republication of II Peter.<sup>16</sup> He found corroboration of these criticisms in that these books "have from early times had a different reputation,"<sup>17</sup> - but this was merely in support of a judgment already made on the basis of his ultimate norm. Having started on the New Testament in this way he apparently also rejected Esther from the Old Testament as unfit for a Christian Book.

Moreover Luther maintained that John's Gospel, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, I John and I Peter were "the true and noblest books of the New Testament" because they set forth the gospel<sup>18</sup> clearly,

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Davies, op. cit., p.33. For Luther "the burden of Scripture is Christ, or the Gospel of Redemption through faith in Jesus Christ" (Paterson, The Rule of Faith, p.433).

<sup>13</sup>Quoted Davies, op. cit., p.36. In the light of these quotations Lindsay (op.cit., p.462n.) and Pecl ("The Bible and the People: Protestant Views of the Authority of the Bible," ed. Dugmore, The Interpretation of the Bible, p.68) are wrong in asserting that Luther meant that the Epistle of James was "a right strawy epistle" only in comparison with Jn., Ro., Gal., Eph., I Jn., and I Pet.

<sup>14</sup>Luther contended that Hebrews contradicted the gospel in one of its doctrines (Davies, op.cit., p.34), although he admitted that "it expounds in masterly wise its chief article - the priesthood of Christ" (Paterson, op. cit., p.434).

<sup>15</sup>Luther thought that Revelation did not preach the gospel (Davies,op.cit., p.35), and could not feel that it had proceeded from the Holy Ghost (Paterson op.cit., p. 435), though he did express a greater appreciation of it later.

<sup>16</sup>Davies, op.cit., p.34.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted ibid., p. 35.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.33, Paterson, op. cit., p.434. Lindsay is wrong in implying that Luther used the term 'the Word' in saying what was most clearly set forth in these books (Lindsay, op. cit., Vol.1, p462).

and this at least implied - though Luther did not work out the implication here - a distinction between the Word of God and Scripture. So did his treatment of Scripture as not merely <sup>19</sup> a collection of isolated texts but a vehicle of the one gospel - in a way that was revolutionary in his time. It was his not regarding all parts of Scripture as of equal value, further, that prevented him from laying down a principle of the authority of Scripture in formal general terms and thus kept him from actually formulating a doctrine of the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the text of the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

Luther thus drew a distinction between Scripture and the Word of God, and what is more, he was the only Reformer to do so. It is true that Calvin and Zwingli's actual Biblical exegesis, and also Calvin's doctrine of the 'internum testimonium spiritus sancti', implied such a distinction, but in their explicit statements they made no distinction whereas Luther did.<sup>21</sup> Luther himself, in his exegesis, had observed historical inaccuracies in the Old Testament,<sup>22</sup> had recognized the Books of Kings as more worthy of credit than the Books of Chronicles,<sup>23</sup> had observed that the Old Testament prophets could err in mundane and political things in spite of being infallible in the things of Christ,<sup>24</sup> and had noted the secondary position of certain

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<sup>19</sup>See below.

<sup>20</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup>Lindsay (op. cit., Vol. 1, p.461f.) and especially A. Peel (op. cit., p.68) are wrong in attributing this distinction to "the Reformers" generally. Cf. Davies, op. cit., p.70ff. concerning Zwingli, p.108ff. concerning Calvin, Lindsay, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.463, Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.275, 127n.

<sup>22</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.40.

<sup>23</sup>Lindsay, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.466.

<sup>24</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.434.

writers who wrote in dependence on the immediate instruments of revelation (e.g., the prophets in their dependence on Moses, the sages and historians on the basis of older instruction, and some of the New Testament writers on the apostles).<sup>25</sup> In all these he admitted the admixture of human and divine elements in Scripture and so by implication the non-identification of Scripture and the Word of God; nevertheless it was none of these that brought him to an actually explicit distinction between the two, but his norm of 'justification by faith.'

Thus we may say that for Luther, although he did not get as far as expressing it in this way,<sup>26</sup> the great original authority which attests all other truths is neither the Church nor the canon of Scripture handed down by the Church; "it is rather the subject-matter of the Word of God, which, however different may be its form of expression, is able to attest itself to the hearts of men as the Word of God by itself and its divine power."<sup>27</sup> As a result, one of his early followers was able to express the truth more precisely than Luther did:

I esteem Holy Scripture above all human treasures, but not so highly as the Word of God, which...is spirit and not letter, and written without pen or paper, so that it can never be blotted out... He who thinks that he can be made truly righteous by means of a Book is ascribing to the dead letter what belongs to the spirit. <sup>28</sup>

And when biblical criticism and the new scientific view of the world later challenged the belief in the Bible theologians were able to think back to this revolutionary insight of Luther into the truth.<sup>29</sup>

But we have already remarked that there was another tendency in Luther's thought, one which conflicted with all this. He was not able to think out to a logical conclusion his new living understanding of the Word of God but again and again returned to the traditional orthodox doctrine of the infallible 'letter' of the Bible which could not be attacked at any point. He was opposed in controversy with an

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>If he had he would not have had the opposing tendency in his thought (see below).

<sup>27</sup>Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, quoted Dugmore, op. cit., p.72.

<sup>28</sup>Hans Denck (1495?-1527), quoted Dugmore, op. cit., p.71.

<sup>29</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.112.

external infallible authority: he therefore sought an external infallible authority to which he himself could appeal. He appealed to the letter of Scripture as an infallible authority whose writers had been literally and inerrantly inspired by God,<sup>30</sup> and which alone proved and transmitted the truths of revelation.

Thus in spite of Luther's deeper insight into what the Word of God was, he yet made it something external and written down. We have seen that he could not identify it with Scripture as such and therefore in his mind it consisted of the Old Testament (except Esther?)-made up of the Law and the gospel of which both were parts of the Word of God to men - and most of the New Testament - that part of it which set forth the gospel,<sup>31</sup> though he never actually in so many words said that the Word of God was limited to such and such parts of Scripture. He called the Bible "particularly the book, writing and word of the Holy Spirit." "I will not waste a word in arguing with one who does not consider that the Scriptures are the Word of God," he said. "We ought not to dispute with a man who thus rejects first principles."<sup>32</sup>

Melanchton and the Protestant Schoolmen who have been so often severely judged for relapsing from Luther's living theology into a petrified biblicism, therefore, were in reality following in their master's footsteps when they defined their ultimate authority as a content of faith written and laid down once and for all; "they differed from him merely in making the text of the Bible as a whole rather than the Word of God into the infallible repository of doctrine."<sup>33</sup>

Finally we must briefly note Luther's attitude to the authority of REASON. With his renewed emphasis on the doctrine of original sin and total depravity his understanding of the role of reason was a return to the Augustinian insight, viz., that it was incompetent to handle the things of religion apart from the existential

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<sup>30</sup> Davies, op.cit., p.40, Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.275.

<sup>31</sup> Davies, op. cit., p37.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted Paterson, op. cit., p.433.

<sup>33</sup> Davies, op. cit., p.74.

viewpoint of regenerated man. But he went further than Augustine, contending that reason was strongly disposed to unbelief and had been the tool by which Satan had wrought much mischief in theology.<sup>34</sup> He called it an "evil beast," a bitter and pestilent enemy of God, and proposed to slay the beast and offer it up as an acceptable sacrifice to Him.<sup>35</sup> This was a return to the extreme attitude in Christian theology exemplified already in Tertullian<sup>36</sup> and was in reaction to the rationalism of the Schoolmen and the philosophy of Aristotle on which they based so much. His denial of the power of unaided human reason to discover truths in the field of natural theology constituted a radical rejection of Aquinas' 'synthesis' of the respective authorities of reason and revelation.<sup>37</sup>

Luther's answer to the problem of authority had great merit in that it stressed that the Church and its mind (and therefore its Pope, its Councils and its 'tradition') stand perpetually under the authority and judgment of God's Word<sup>38</sup> and in that it did not identify that Word with Scripture as such. Further, it sought to objectivize the content of religious faith against the danger of complete subjectivism.

Actually, however, this attempt at objectivization failed. For Luther the objective and ultimate authority is the Word of God: but this Word of God is a selection from the Bible, and the principle of selection turns out to be something not objective like grammatical, literary, or historical grounds, but a religious experience, viz., the experience of peace and forgiveness which he had found through Paul's theology and which therefore made Paul's theology the criterion of the Word of God for him. Thus we are asked to accept such and such books

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<sup>34</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.435.

<sup>35</sup>In Galatians (3:6). See Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.228.

<sup>36</sup>See Chapter IX, section 'Reason.'

<sup>37</sup>See the previous Chapter on 'Reason and Revelation.'

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.270.

as the Word of God because Luther's religious experience (although he may well have thought that his was the universal experience, as people often do about their experience) commended them to him as such. But, as Davies says,

it is clearly impossible to assert that a certain source of religious truth is objectively authoritative on the evidence of one person's subjective experience. In fact, instead of an objective religion we find a<sup>39</sup> blank subjectivism, heavily, but not impenetrably, disguised.

On two other grounds Luther's solution is also to be criticized. The first is what no modern scholar would deny today, namely that the meaning of Scripture is not just everywhere clear and plain to the ordinary reader. It must be interpreted and this inevitably brings in the subjective element to some extent, and with it the danger of arbitrariness. Every translation out of the Hebrew and Greek texts is itself "surreptitious exegesis."<sup>40</sup> The claim that the Bible could be read, just as it stood, without the guidance of tradition, provoked the satirical epigram which described it as "the book where everyone seeks his own proper opinion...where still everyone finds what he seeks,"<sup>41</sup> and the truth of this judgment is shown in the multiplicity of sects which has sprung up to curse Christianity, each finding its *raison d'être* in its own interpretation of the Bible.

The other ground is that of literary and historical criticism which has made impossible the old conception of the nature of Scripture and the content of revelation (which we have already discussed in the Introduction).<sup>42</sup> Luther was driven to provide an infallible authority (Scripture) in opposition to the infallible authority claimed by Rome; but modern criticism has shown that neither of the two is infallible.

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<sup>39</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.57.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Quoted Dodd, The Bible Today, p.22.

<sup>42</sup>It will be remembered that in the Introduction we remarked that the Reformers did not change the conception of the content of revelation which was current throughout Christianity from the time of the early Church until the nineteenth century. This was true also of Luther, although his doctrine of the Word of God represented a potential break-away.

CALVIN

By the time Calvin had written the first form of the Institutes he had fully recognized the problem of authority and that his exaltation of Scripture to the supreme place involved him in conflict with the Roman CHURCH. In it he attacked the Roman Church for assuming that

it is in the power of the Church to lay down articles of faith and to equate the authority of the Church with the authority of the Sacred Scripture; a man is not a Christian who does not consent with certainty to all their doctrines... Meanwhile, at their own pleasure, despising the Word of God, they hammer out doctrines, in which they later insist that men should have certain faith, and lay down laws whose observance they make obligatory.<sup>43</sup>

And this they did when even the apostles were denied the power to lay down new articles of faith, he added. He criticized the Roman rites not so much on the ground that they are not prescribed in Scripture, which he admitted to prescribe very few, but because in spite of the fact that they were not so prescribed they were attributed divine sanction and made absolutely obligatory.<sup>44</sup>

Calvin deplored the "most disastrous error" of those who held that it was the authority of the Church which gave weight to the Scriptures, "as if forsooth the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended on the judgment of men."<sup>45</sup> True, the Church did have an authority, but it was the authority given to its "ministry of the Word of God."<sup>46</sup> It was not the Church that judged the Word, but the Word that judged whether it was a true Church: the sign 'par excellence' of the genuine presence of the Church is "the pure preaching of the Word of God."<sup>47</sup>

He acknowledged that from time to time there might be differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of Scripture and that

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<sup>43</sup>Quoted from the first edition of Calvin's Institutes, Davies, op. cit., p.103. Cf. the edition translated by Henry Beveridge, John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, London, James Clarke, 1953, Vol.II p.389ff.

<sup>44</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.127.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted ibid., p.108.

<sup>46</sup>Quoted ibid., p.102. My italics.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p.125 and 103n.

then a COUNCIL of bishops would be quite a good means of resolving the difference; but he denied that this made the Church an independent authority, or even that the Councils were identical with the Church, pointing out that it had been a Council that condemned Christ, that even at Nicaea there was great strife until Constantine quelled the bishops, and that Pope Leo himself had charged the Council of Chalcedon with ambition. On the whole he ascribes honour to the four great Councils, while asserting that later Councils have most seriously deteriorated; but his criterion always is conformity with Scripture. Thus Calvin took the same view of Councils on the matter of authority as he did of the Church as a whole: they had no independent authority, but only an authority completely derived from the Word of God.<sup>48</sup>

Calvin thus gave an explicit answer to the problem of authority by attributing that authority to THE WORD OF GOD, and denying that it existed elsewhere except in so far as it was derived from that Word; there is no appeal from the Word of God, and no man or body of men can set aside, add to, or disagree with the Word.<sup>49</sup> Far from being dependent on the authority or guarantee of the Church, its own authority is self-evident.

As to the question, How shall we be persuaded that it came from God without recurring to a decree of the Church? it is just the same as if it were asked, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter of their taste.<sup>50</sup>

For Calvin the Word of God and the Scriptures are one and the same thing, as Warfield has shown,<sup>51</sup> and far from contradicting this by ascribing more authority to one part of Scripture than to another, Calvin regarded both Testaments and every part of the Bible as having the same authority (although the ceremonial and judicial sections do not apply to us as laws given for the Jews before Christ).<sup>52</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p.129f.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. ibid., p.107.

<sup>50</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I.vii,2.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.108f.

<sup>52</sup>Davies (op. cit., p.109-114) advances enough evidence in proof of this to confute Peel (op. cit., p.68) and others who contend otherwise.

Scriptures were the Word of God because they were oracles composed "at the dictation of the Holy Spirit," for whom the apostles were "certain and authentic secretaries."<sup>53</sup> Calvin thus committed himself to a completely verbal and mechanical theory of inspiration.<sup>54</sup>

However a very important point to note is that, unlike Luther, Calvin maintained that the Bible had no authority over the state, which derived its authority to publish its own valid ordinances immediately from God. Thus in Calvin's theology "the door has been pushed slightly ajar for the State to enter later with a claim of absolute right to speak in its own sphere, and then for science, art, and the rest to do the same."<sup>55</sup>

On the other extreme from the Roman Church were proponents of what we have called THE INNER LIGHT, the Anabaptists, who claimed to have private revelations granted them by the Holy Spirit and which were preferable to the written Word. These Calvin refuted on the ground that according to John 16:13f. the Spirit's function is to confirm and seal what Christ has taught, not to invent new doctrines, and that all utterances of the Spirit, so-called, must be tested by the utterances of the Spirit in Scripture, since the Spirit cannot be inconsistent.<sup>56</sup> His denial that even the apostles had the power to lay down new doctrines applied also to them.<sup>57</sup>

In line with the traditional conception Calvin understood divine revelation to be supra-rational and therefore needing a supernatural guarantee.<sup>58</sup> This he believed to be constituted in "proofs",

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<sup>53</sup>Quoted Davies, op. cit., p.114, See further p.115-116.

<sup>54</sup>I.e., in his dogmatic formulation of his conception of the Word in Scripture. This is not to deny that in his exegesis Calvin, like Luther and Zwingli, implied a more enlightened view (cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.127n., 275, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.111). Nevertheless probably Calvin would have explained actual mistakes that he saw in the text in the same way as modern Fundamentalists do, i.e., by denying that the original text was imperfect.

<sup>55</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.138.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p.118.

<sup>57</sup>See above where we discussed Calvin's attitude to the authority of the Church.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.212, 154ff., 177ff.

such as the antiquity, the miracles, and the fulfilled prophecies of Scripture,<sup>59</sup> by which it could be proved to the REASON that it possessed the authority of God. "In the way of argument," he said, "it is easy to establish, by evidence of various kinds, that....the Law, the Prophecies, and the Gospel, proceeded from him."<sup>60</sup> He seems to have been inconsistent at this point, however, on the one hand maintaining that without the testimony of the Spirit it cannot be proved to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God, on the other that it can be proved to the intellect but that while the unbeliever refuses the testimony of the Spirit he cannot have faith.<sup>61</sup> At any rate he held that "the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason,"<sup>62</sup> although he did not thereby mean to disparage reason as such,<sup>63</sup> and that once Scripture "obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit" it "ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason."<sup>64</sup>

With this doctrine of THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT Calvin made his outstanding contribution to the discussion of the problem of authority. This was not an altogether "new principle for theology," as it has been described however,<sup>65</sup> for, as Richardson points out,<sup>66</sup> from the disciples whose hearts burned within them on the road to Emmaus, through St. Augustine with his doctrine of "the interior light," to St. Thomas as we saw in the previous chapter, the insight to which Calvin gave expression had been a "universal insight of Christendom."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>We have already commented on the breakdown of the "argument from prophecy" and the "argument from miracle" (Chapters I and II above).

<sup>60</sup>Calvin, op. cit., I.vii,4.

<sup>61</sup>See Davies, op. cit., p.141f.

<sup>62</sup>Calvin, op. cit., I.vii,4.

<sup>63</sup>Cf. Richardson, op. cit., p.212.

<sup>64</sup>Quoted Lindsay, op. cit., Vol.I, p.465, Dugmore, op. cit., p.69. Beveridge's version reads "deigns not" for "ought not" (Calvin, op. cit., I. vii, 5).

<sup>65</sup>By Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.7.

<sup>66</sup>Richardson, op. cit., p.213-219

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p.211.

Luther<sup>68</sup> and Zwingli<sup>69</sup> too had both spoken of the Spirit attesting or teaching the meaning and the truth of the Word of God. But Calvin was the first to give this doctrine a clearly worked out formulation and to provide it precisely as an answer to the question, how is "the authority of Scripture"<sup>70</sup> attested. Calvin himself however, did not see the fundamental character of this issue for he thought of it as quite separate from the general question of authority (which is solved for him by the supremacy of the Bible), and once he has shown how the authority of the Bible is attested he does not again go behind it to that which attests it.<sup>71</sup>

As God alone<sup>72</sup> can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony<sup>73</sup> of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us.... Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture.<sup>74</sup>

In these words Calvin formulates his doctrine of the 'internum testimonium Spiritus Sancti.' Thus the authority of the Bible is commended to the Christian believer by the Spirit of God convincing inwardly. Calvin himself did not actually explicitly relate the idea of the witness of the Spirit with that of the intrinsic coercive power of the Bible showing that it comes from God as clearly as black distinguishes itself from white<sup>75</sup> but they do not necessarily contradict each other. Warfield suggests that we relate them by saying that the Spirit provides in us the sense we need to perceive the coercive power of the Scriptures, just as we need a sense to distinguish white from black.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>See Davies, op. cit., p.32. Luther must have come very close to Calvin's doctrine (cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.171f.).

<sup>69</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.72.

<sup>70</sup>Calvin, op. cit., I.i and the heading. My italics.

<sup>71</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.138.

<sup>72</sup>The version quoted by Lindsay (op. cit., Vol.I, p.465) and Peel (op.cit., p.69) reads "word" instead of "words."

<sup>73</sup>He also speaks of it as "the secret testimony of the Spirit" (Calvin, op. cit., I.vii, 4).

<sup>74</sup>Calvin, op. cit., I.vii, 4 and 5.

<sup>75</sup>See above.

<sup>76</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.141.

In our criticism of Calvin's answer to the problem of authority we may say that it shares with Luther's the great merits of subjecting all other authorities to that of the Word of God and of seeking to objectivise that Word; and it does not turn out like Luther's to be the elevation of one man's personal experience to the level of the finally authoritative source of religious truth, for the Scripture, in Calvin's view, was a body of writings defined long before his time. He further made great contributions by bringing to the fore the doctrines of the witness of the Spirit and of the coerciveness of truth<sup>77</sup> in revelation. His doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, which was a re-emphasis of a biblical teaching,<sup>78</sup> prepared the way for the revolution in the understanding of faith from a merely informing assent to dogma to the transforming faith which is the gift of the Spirit,<sup>79</sup> and also for the understanding of the Word of God as personally addressed to the individual.

However, Calvin's attempt to objectivise the content of the Word of God and at the same time to make it alone the supreme authority fails too. In his view the Scripture was a body of writings defined long before his time. But how was it defined? Not by the Councils of the Church, for they merely formulated decisions already reached gradually by the great body of Christians on grounds of their personal and corporate experience. But to assert this is to give the prior authority not to the Scriptures but to that body of Christians which lived between the foundation of the Church and the fixing of the canon.<sup>80</sup> To answer that the authority of the Scripture could not possibly depend on the Church even in this sense because it had forced itself upon the Church in virtue of the intrinsic coerciveness of the truth it contained is to fail to answer why the Reformers rejected the Apocrypha when the early Church had for the most part

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<sup>77</sup>Cf. J. Oman, Grace and Personality, London, C.U.P., 1925, p.12.

<sup>78</sup>Cf., e.g., I Cor.12:3.

<sup>79</sup>Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.156-172.

<sup>80</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.90.

taken it over from the Septuagintal canon,<sup>81</sup> and in the end really begs the question, which after all is, Are these writings, and just these writings, the ones which contain the final truth? Also, what is coercive does not always turn out to be the truth, and on the other hand the truth is not always coercive. If Davies is right the function of the witness of the Spirit in Calvin's mind was limited to the attesting of the divine origin and authority of the Scripture as a whole and he did not think of it as determining which parts of Scripture should be included in the canon.<sup>82</sup> But even if he did, as Calvin formulated the doctrine it would lead to complete subjectivism, and it fails to answer a situation in which a man like Luther denies that certain books are accredited in this way. Moreover it fails in that the modern believer does not admit that that witness leads him to accept every part of Scripture as the Word of God. In fact when Servetus denied part of the content of the Scriptures to be the Word of God Calvin was forced to invoke the authority of the Church as the ultimate arbiter of correct interpretation as against the individual.<sup>83</sup>

The second and third points of criticism against Luther's solution apply also to Calvin. Calvin's attaching equal authority to all parts of Scripture, in contrast to Luther, actually exposed the Christian religion to the dangers of a chaotic individualism even much more than Luther did.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, in his doctrine of the witness of the Spirit Calvin seems to be inconsistent in saying that the Spirit reveals to us the divine origin and authority of Scripture and at the same time asserting that He will reveal no truth outside Scripture (in opposition to the Anabaptists).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Williams, "Tradition," E.R.E., Vol.XII, p.414a. The Reformers' rejection of the Apocrypha was partly due to II Mac.12:43-45.

<sup>82</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.142-144. Cf. Calvin, op. cit., I.vii,1,2,4.

<sup>83</sup>Cf. W. Neil, The Rediscovery of the Bible, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1954, p.112.

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Dodd, The Bible Today, p.22.

<sup>85</sup>Davies, op. cit., p.149.

## CHAPTER VII

### AUTHORITY IN THE MODERN AGE

#### ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Not until the Reformation was the problem of authority deliberately faced. In reaction to the Reformation, with the Tridentine (1545-1563)<sup>1</sup> and the Vatican (1869-1870)<sup>2</sup> Councils modern Roman Catholicism began. The Roman Church claims that it

received and venerates, with equal pious affection and reverence, all the books both of the New and the Old Testaments, since one God is the author of both, together with the said Traditions, as well those pertaining to faith as those pertaining to morals, as having been given either from the lips of Christ or by the dictation of the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup>...according to that sense which the Holy Mother Church has held and holds, to whom it belongs to decide upon the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

We see here, first, the Roman attitude to THE BIBLE. "It would be utterly impious either to limit inspiration to some portions only of Sacred Scripture, or to admit that the sacred author himself had erred.... For all the books... with all their parts, have been written under the dictation of the Holy Ghost...and...are immune from absolutely all error."<sup>5</sup> In spite of this it may be enough that in inspiration "Almighty God should inspire the sacred writer with ideas, without also providing in the inspiration itself the words wherewith to express those ideas."<sup>6</sup> Thus Pius XII acknowledges the individual styles, idiom, and "processes of thought" of the biblical authors.<sup>7</sup> It is not even denied that there are degrees of inspiration<sup>8</sup> though inspiration always involves infallibility as comprising God's author-

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<sup>1</sup>See Latourette, A History of Christianity, p.866-871.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.1092-1095.

<sup>3</sup>Tridentine decree, quoted Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church, p.365.

<sup>4</sup>The Tridentine Profession of Faith (1564), quoted Bettenson, op. cit., p.372.

<sup>5</sup>Leo XIII, Providentissimus Deus (1893), cap.vii; cf. Pius XII Biblical Studies ('Divino Afflante Spiritu', 1943), Introd., para.3.

<sup>6</sup>Lattey, Introduction to the English Translation of the Encyclical Providentissimus Deus. This is the opinion of the Biblical Commission instituted by Leo XIII in 1902.

<sup>7</sup>Pius XII, op. cit., Part III, para.37f.,43.

<sup>8</sup>Prime, The Holy See and Modern Problems: Holy Scripture (unpublished lecture).

ship.<sup>9</sup> The possibility of sources behind and even additions to and glosses in the text is not denied, but to be consistent the Roman Church must add that certainly the sources and at least some of the additions were inspired as well.<sup>10</sup> In line with this, and parallel to its narrowing down the authority of the Church to the single voice of the Pope, it further selects from all the extant manuscripts and versions the Vulgate as "entirely immune from any error in matters of faith and morals."<sup>11</sup>

TRADITION is placed on a level of equal authority with the Bible. The "sine scripto traditiones" are to be accepted "pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia."<sup>12</sup> As God is author of both Scripture and tradition, it is asserted, it is impossible for them to conflict.<sup>13</sup> By 'tradition' is meant not a body of teaching which never found literary expression but one which was handed down orally by Christ to the succeeding generation.

Those unwritten traditions form an important supplement to the written Word by revealing the mind of Christ, otherwise undisclosed upon capital points of doctrine, worship and discipline, while they also, in virtue of their clearness, supply the standard which is called for by the obscurity and the manifoldness of Scripture. The oral tradition thus appears to be the more necessary and the more serviceable of the two channels of revelation.<sup>14</sup>

In fact the infallible inspiration of the Bible is accepted only because tradition asserts it according to Roman Catholicism,<sup>15</sup> and the consent of the Fathers is made a supreme test of exegesis.<sup>16</sup> In all things concerning faith and morals, it is held, the "unanimity" (which is explained, when pressed, as the "moral" or practical unanimity) of the Fathers must have arisen from the unanimous teaching of the apostles, and therefore from our Lord Himself.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., cf. Leo XII, op. cit., cap.vii.

<sup>10</sup>Prime, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Pius XII, op. cit., Part II, para.26. Cf. Latourette, op. cit., p. 868.

<sup>12</sup>Denzinger, quoted Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.108.

<sup>13</sup>Leo XIII, op. cit., cap.v.

<sup>14</sup>Paterson, The Rule of Faith, p.33.

<sup>15</sup>Prime, op. cit., cf. Knox, The Belief of Catholics, p.110.

<sup>16</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.33n.

THE CHURCH is the custodian of the two deposits, Scripture and tradition. The idea of the Church bulks central in the Roman religion, and it is necessary to recognize how true that is before one can really understand Roman Catholicism. It dominates and colours the whole interpretation of the Christian dispensation. It is conceived as having been founded by Christ, not only in its origin but in its constitution. It administers His power on earth, perpetuates His work, and is in a real sense a reincarnation of Him. "The visible Church is the Son of God as He continuously appears, ever repeats Himself, and eternally renews His youth among men in human form. It is His perennial incarnation."<sup>17</sup> Roman Catholicism maintains that the distinction between Christ and the Church that Protestants make is an artificial one. "Being the Body of Christ, the Church is identical in a mystical way with its Lord, and consequently the authority of the Church cannot but coincide with the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture."<sup>18</sup>

Christ "bequeathed to that Church his own teaching office, with the guarantee (naturally) that it should not err in teaching."<sup>19</sup> "As the Divinely appointed teacher of revealed truth, the Church is infallible. This gift of inerrancy is guaranteed to it by the words of Christ" in John 14:16 and 16:13<sup>20</sup> and "by the unanimous testimony of the Fathers."<sup>21</sup> The scope of this infallibility is not to "manifest new doctrine," but to "guard, and faithfully expound the revelation handed down by the Apostles, or the deposit of faith."<sup>22</sup> A divine revelation requires an infallible interpreter, it is argued, lest false interpretation render it as ineffective as if it had not been given,

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<sup>17</sup>Möhlner, quoted Paterson, op. cit., p.24ln.

<sup>18</sup>Schweitzer, "Biblical Theology and Ethics Today," ed. Richardson and Schweitzer, Biblical Authority for Today, p.139.

<sup>19</sup>Knox, The Belief of Catholics, p.29.

<sup>20</sup>See chapter II for a discussion of these texts.

<sup>21</sup>Joyce, "The Church," C.E., Vol.III, p.754b.

<sup>22</sup>The Vatican Council, quoted Joyce, op. cit., p.754b.

and because without it "the flock would have no guarantee of the truth of any doctrine."<sup>23</sup>

It was the Church that finally decided which books were canonical and which not at the Council of Trent. One may not appeal to the authority of the Scriptures since that authority depends on the authority of the Church.<sup>24</sup> In fact sacred writings never were the supreme authority in Divine revelation, for above Scripture there was always the living voice, whether of the prophets, the synagogue (which replaced the prophets) or the Church (which replaced the synagogue).<sup>25</sup> Thus a Roman theologian can say, "Neither the Holy Scriptures nor the Divine tradition, but the teaching Church, which infallibly expounds both sources of truth...is for us the first rule of faith,"<sup>26</sup> and a Roman catechism demands that "the Catholic Christian must believe... that which the Catholic Church presents to be believed, whether the same be found in the Scriptures or not."<sup>27</sup>

THE HIERARCHY of the Church make up the actual depositaries of the deposit handed down in Scripture and tradition. Thus only those who are in the apostolic succession are able to interpret the Scriptures correctly. Various texts from Scripture are advanced to prove that Christ committed the infallible teaching office to this succession.<sup>28</sup> When this hierarchy differs within itself its infallible authority devolves upon THE GENERAL COUNCILS in which it meets. But above all, by the decree De Ecclesia Christi of the Vatican Council of 1870, the authority of the depositary class is concentrated in the hands of a single chief depositary, viz., THE POPE:

We... define that it is a divinely revealed dogma: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks 'ex cathedra,' that is, when as shepherd and teacher of all Christians by his supreme Apostolic authority

<sup>23</sup>Joyce, op. cit., p.755a; cf. Toner, "Infallibility," C.E., Vol.VII, p.791b.

<sup>24</sup>Toner, op. cit., p. 792a, Knox, op. cit., p.110.

<sup>25</sup>Prime, op. cit.,

<sup>26</sup>Loofs, quoted Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.108.

<sup>27</sup>Quoted ibid.

<sup>28</sup>See chapter II.

he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in the person of St. Peter, has that infallibility which Our divine Redeemer wished his Church to have in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals; and therefore the definitions of the Roman Pontiffs, by their own force and not by reason of the consent of the Church are irreformable.... If anyone should say anything contrary to this definition of ours...let him be anathema.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the Pope has become the infallible organ of revelation par excellence who "remains ever free from all error."<sup>30</sup> Various texts, especially Matthew 16:17-19, are advanced to prove that this was in the mind of Christ.<sup>31</sup> He is the finally authoritative interpreter of Scripture. As far as tradition goes he can assert, "I am tradition."<sup>32</sup> As the "visible foundation" he is the "unfailing principle" of unity of the Church and of the episcopacy,<sup>32</sup> and therefore whatever bishops or Christians are out of communion with him are automatically outside the Church. His authority is higher even than that of the Councils in so far as without the confirmation of the Pope no council can be reckoned ecumenical or infallible<sup>33</sup> and "in all cases pertaining to ecclesiastical rule" he is a final court of appeal above any Council.<sup>34</sup> In short, it is for him to decide the meaning of Scripture, the genuineness of tradition, the legitimacy of Councils, and the orthodoxy of the bishops and the faithful.

Finally we may note that the Roman Church believes that Jesus left his power of performing miracles to His true Church that it might be distinguished from all false churches and schismatic sects by this ATTESTATION OF 'DUNAMIS.' Thus "the Catholic Church has always claimed that the persistence of ecclesiastical miracles is a subsidiary proof of her own legitimacy."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup>The Vatican Council, De Ecclesia Christi, cap.iv (Father Prime's translation). Cf. Bettenson, op. cit., p.381f.

<sup>30</sup>The Vatican Council, De Ecclesia Christi, cap.iv.

<sup>31</sup>See chapter II; also Joyce, "Pope, The," C.E., Vol.XII, Toner, "Infallibility", C.E., Vol.VII.

<sup>32</sup>Pius IX, 1846-1848, quoted by Williams, "Tradition," E.R.E., Vol.XII, p.414b.

<sup>33</sup>Toner, op. cit., p.792f., Knox, Off the Record, p.69, q.v.

<sup>34</sup>The Vatican Council, De Ecclesia Christi, cap.iii.

<sup>35</sup>Knox, The Belief of Catholics, p.128f.

We shall leave criticism of the concept of the infallible BIBLE to the next section. But here we must note the Roman subordination of the authority of the Bible. It was only with Leo XIII's encyclical in 1893 that the study of the Bible was given impetus in the Roman Church, and only under Pius XI, immediate predecessor of the present Pope, that degrees in that study were given the same official status as degrees in theology or canon law!<sup>36</sup> Scripture is subordinated to dogma: although formally it is asserted that the Scriptures constitute the norm of the dogma the attribution of infallibility to the dogma which rules out of court its continual re-examination in the light of Scripture in practice makes it the norm in the exposition of Scripture.<sup>37</sup> Scripture is made a mere appendage to tradition: in justifying the dogma proclaimed in 1950 the Roman Church does not spend time giving a scriptural foundation but appeals to the "consensus" of the Church, as if the collective inspiration of the Church has no longer any need to be controlled by the apostolic witness.<sup>38</sup> The principle of Scripture, thus weakened, is finally abrogated by subordination to the Pope: although formally the Roman Church attempts to co-ordinate the authorities of Scripture and papacy in fact the recognition of the Pope as its only authoritative expositor,<sup>39</sup> and its removal from being the critical court of appeal by the establishment of the papal doctrinal authority as the supreme court of appeal,<sup>40</sup> ranks him above it. No wonder then that even on the formal side we have Aquinas's affirmation, "The sole rule of faith is the canonical scriptures,"<sup>41</sup> replaced by Loof's that not Scripture but the teaching Church is "the first rule of faith."

It is true, as we have seen, that the Church lived by an

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<sup>36</sup> See Pius, XII, op. cit., Part I, para.10.

<sup>37</sup> Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.146.

<sup>38</sup> Cullmann, The Early Church, p.84f.

<sup>39</sup> Brunner. Revelation and Reason, p.146

<sup>40</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p.108f.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted, ed. Dugmore, The Interpretation of the Bible, p.43. See Chapter VI above.

oral TRADITION at first. But - as scientific historical study has proved - any merely oral tradition becomes an admixture of "early" elements and "late" accretions.<sup>42</sup> It was for this very reason that the New Testament was formed, as we saw - to preserve the original 'paradosis' in its purity so that it could remain the criterion. The very historical nature of the Christian revelation makes the priority of the written testimony over the oral essential.<sup>43</sup> In spite of all this and of the evidence of its truth in the apocryphal Gospels and the rapid perversion of Biblical doctrine in the early days of Christianity, Roman Catholicism makes the authority of tradition equal with that of Scripture.

The Roman theory requires that Acts 1:13 be interpreted in a way that seems inconsistent with I Cor. 15. It is true that the original oral tradition must have been wider than the written records of it, but there is no evidence of any considerable body of it surviving in addition to the records. Hegesippus and Papias tried to recover more of this precious material in the second century, but did not succeed.<sup>44</sup> Even Roman Catholics such as Döllinger, Möhler, and Newman have been sceptical of the historical tenability of the proposition that practically the whole system of Roman dogma, worship, and government has been conveyed from Christ and His apostles by unwritten tradition. Newman proposed that it was a logical development but the Vatican Council expressly laid down that the Church does not declare new truth but only expounds the deposit of faith delivered through the apostles<sup>45</sup> - and this in spite of the late appearance of and prolonged controversy about, e.g., the doctrines of Purgatory (not even a probable opinion in Augustine's time), the seven sacraments (matured only in the late Middle Ages), and the Immaculate Conception (an article of faith only in 1854). As Paterson points out, the "unanimous" acceptance to which Rome appeals in proof of its tradition means only

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<sup>42</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.126.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.127.

<sup>44</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.34.

<sup>45</sup>The Vatican Council, De Ecclesia Christi, cap.iv. See Paterson, op. cit., p.39.

the witness of some persons, sometimes a minority, in a particular church or period, and the lack of contradiction by others.<sup>46</sup>

It is only the doctrine of the infallibility of THE CHURCH which lends such plausibility as it possesses to the authority of an oral tradition.<sup>47</sup> "Only the Church which believes that in the sacrifice of the Mass the sacrificial death of Christ is repeated can respect the Scripture and the tradition pari pietatis affectu."<sup>48</sup> It cannot maintain that its imitation of Christ has been other than broken and imperfect on the practical side, however, so how can it expect to be infallibly perfect on the theoretical? True, every Church believes that the Spirit has kept it faithful to the fundamental truths, at least in the long run, but that is not the same as to claim infallibility at all times and in all things (pertaining to faith and morals). Nor would an infallible Church be an advantage, for it is in striving for inward assurance that truth becomes truly our own. Romanism, by its stress that dogma is to be received on the external authority of the Church - in contrast to the Reformers' doctrine of the inner witness of the Spirit - tends to reduce faith to intellectual assent to something heteronomously imposed from without. Faith in Christ, faith in His Word, is thus based and made dependent on faith in (the infallible trustworthiness of) the Church.<sup>49</sup> This is in line with its conception of the mediatorship of the Church. It allows no room for the immediate inward appropriation of truth by the individual which is the only true certainty and the only way to true faith. It is this stress on intellectual acceptance that confines its approach to the outsider so much to the rational. But faith is not intellectual acceptance that merely informs: it is the gift of the Spirit that transforms the whole man.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the most

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<sup>46</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.36.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p.39.

<sup>48</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.126.

<sup>49</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.166-172 cf.156.

<sup>50</sup>See further the Introduction.

fundamental criticism of the concept of the infallible Church is Barth's that it becomes "wholly oblivious of the truth that the Church and its mind stand perpetually under the authority and judgment of God's Word." 51,52

Nor has the Church always placed reliance upon the same organ as infallible. At first it must have been very loosely the episcopate, then when the bishops disagreed the Councils, and finally, since 1870, the Pope in isolation.<sup>53</sup> But as far as THE COUNCILS are concerned, in none of the Scriptures are the contributions of the collective body found to be comparable in spiritual discernment or trustworthiness to those of the individual men whom God called to be His special instruments of religious enlightenment and progress. Further, many of their "infallible" conclusions were arrived at with extremely bad arguments and in the midst of violent party strife. Nor have they even all agreed. Eight out of the nineteen have been wholly and six partly condemned later by the Pope (including the "Robber-Synod" of Ephesus which was as large and representative as Chalcedon and Nicaea).<sup>54</sup> As Martineau acutely remarks, neither a fallible individual nor a collection of fallible individuals can constitute an infallible authority.<sup>55</sup>

We have already criticized at length the Roman attempt to base their claims for THE POPE upon Scripture,<sup>56</sup> and, where it fails, on tradition.<sup>57</sup> To say the least, there is no valid proof that Peter was enabled or intended, "to transmit his problematical powers to his hypothetical successors."<sup>58</sup> Moreover the limitation of the infallibility of the papacy to matters of faith and morals when on the

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<sup>51</sup>Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.270.

<sup>52</sup>Note also that when Rome speaks of the "living" voice of the Church being above the "dead" word of Scripture it is using purely emotional and propaganda words for which other words such as "undefined" and "defined" could readily be substituted.

<sup>53</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.47.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p.46f.

<sup>55</sup>Cited by Toner, op. cit., p.794a.

<sup>56</sup>See Chapter II, III.

<sup>57</sup>Chapter IV.

<sup>58</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p.49.

one hand Matthew 16:17-19 conveyed administrative power to Peter, and on the other when the Scriptures are assigned inerrancy in all its knowledge seems quite arbitrary. Further, if God made the Pope infallible why did he not make all the other bishops infallible as well, seeing that that would have allayed so much of strife and false doctrine - unless we say it is "easier" for the "omnipotent" God to make one bishop infallible. In fact why did He not make all believers doctrinally infallible?

Nor has the course of true papacy run smooth. During the Great Western Schism, there were at one time three popes,<sup>59</sup> and the Council of Constance which put an end to the schism did not comply with the condition that "there can be no such thing as an oecumenical council independent of, or in opposition to, the pope."<sup>60</sup> Roman Catholicism has to call this "an extra-constitutional crisis," and therefore "an altogether exceptional emergency."<sup>61</sup> But this is one exception that does not prove the rule!

In 681 the ecumenical Council under Pope Agatho anathematized his predecessor, Honorius I, as "the confirmer of the heresy" of Monotheletism. The letter of Honorius which was at fault had been an official one, but it is denied that it had the characteristics which would make it 'ex cathedra,' though it was held to be so by some Roman Catholics before the Vatican Council.<sup>62</sup> In any event the argument holds that if the popes in their studied declarations have contradicted one another how can they be expected to be infallible just by making pronouncements in a certain, more closely defined way? Taught by this lesson many Roman Catholic theologians hold that "were a pope to become a public heretic, i.e., were he publicly and officially

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<sup>59</sup>See Latourette, op. cit., p.627ff.

<sup>60</sup>Toner, op. cit., p.795b.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p.799a.

<sup>62</sup>See Bettenson, op. cit., p.128, Paterson, op. cit., p.51, Toner op. cit., p.798, Chapman, "Honorius I", C.E., Vol. VII.

to teach some doctrine clearly opposed to what has been defined as 'de fide catholica'...the pope would 'ipso facto' cease to be pope.<sup>63</sup> But this is to contradict everything else that is asserted by the Roman Church about the infallibility of the Pope!

#### FUNDAMENTALISM.

For Fundamentalism true religion is "the Bible, and the Bible only."<sup>64</sup> Revelation is to be exactly equated with the Bible, in its total contents.<sup>65</sup> The vindication of Fundamentalism begins with the Bible itself: the prophets regarded themselves as "just instruments through whom God gave revelations which came from them, not as their own product, but as the pure word of Jehovah,"<sup>66</sup> Jesus implied the infallible authority and inspiration of the Old Testament in many of His sayings, and the apostles, by treating the Old Testament Scriptures as infallible and at the same time describing each others writings as scripture,<sup>67</sup> attributed infallible inspiration to the whole Bible. John 16:12-15 is interpreted to mean not as in Roman Catholicism the infallibility of the hierarchy but the verbal infallibility of the writings of the apostles, and Matthew 10:20 (Mark 13:11), 11 Tim. 3:16 and 11 Pet. 1:19-21 are used in further support of this.<sup>68</sup> Thus the Bible is literally the utterance of God, as indeed the New Testament itself asserts in its tacit equation of "Scripture says" and "God says" in preface to quotations from the Old Testament,<sup>69</sup> and in describing Scripture as the "oracles" of God.<sup>70</sup> In further support of this there is the fact that the Church for eighteen

<sup>63</sup>Toner, op. cit., p.799a.

<sup>64</sup>A phrase attributed to Chillingworth which is often quoted.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p.10.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p.92.

<sup>67</sup>Tim. 5:18; 11 Pet.3:16. See Chapter IV, section 'The New Testament.'

<sup>68</sup>Warfield, op. cit., p.188f., 424, 131ff. and 245-296, 137.

<sup>69</sup>Warfield devotes nearly 50 pp. to show that "Scripture says" and God says" were completely interchangeable and identical in meaning for the N.T. writers. (Warfield, op. cit., p.299-348).

<sup>70</sup>Ro.3:2. Warfield shows at great length that Paul meant "an oracular book" of the "crystalized speech of God". (Warfield, op. cit., p.351-407).

centuries taught a doctrine of inerrant and plenary inspiration.

To question anything in the Scriptures, therefore, is to question the very words of God and so to deny that He is true. To argue on the basis of modern supposition about the impartation and reception of knowledge is to use the assumptions of an age which like all other ages will pass away and leave the Word of God enduring for ever. In the end these suppositions cannot be relevant for the question, How was the revelation transmitted? can be answered only by those to and through whom it was transmitted, i.e., the authors of Scripture.

The crucial question is: Are the Biblical writers trustworthy as doctrinal guides? To reject the teaching of the apostles and our Lord regarding the doctrine of inspiration is to impeach their teaching generally. We accept the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation etc., on the authority of the teaching of the Bible, but as Dr. Purves has said, "If we may not accept its account of itself, why should we care to ascertain its account of other things?"<sup>71</sup> To explain away the New Testament writers' testimony to plenary inspiration on the ground that it is due to the adoption of the current theory implies that they "are trustworthy only when they teach novelties."<sup>72</sup> To assert that Jesus (or the New Testament writers) "knew better" but adopted the current doctrine for some "ad hoc" reason is to assert that He made use of a deceit in order to support the truth for which he argued and so to impeach his veracity.

A doctrine of inspiration is thus fundamental to Fundamentalism. Two writers regarded as classic authorities in this field are Warfield and H. Rimmer (who has American doctorates in Science, Laws and Divinity.) Their theories, however, are not the same. Rimmer's concept of inspiration is external and mechanical to the last degree. According to him Isaiah 40:22 teaches that the world is a sphere and

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<sup>71</sup>Quoted Warfield, op. cit., p.214.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p.192. Italics original.

Job 38:14 implies the solar system. These and similar passages are advanced to prove that the Bible must be verbally inspired to the extent that its authors could not even have understood what they were writing.<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand Warfield denies inspiration by "dictation."<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless it was a process in which the control of the Holy Spirit was too complete to permit the human qualities of the secondary authors to condition the pure word of God in any way.<sup>75</sup> "To wish to maintain the inspiration of the subject-matter, without that of the words, is a folly; for everywhere are thoughts and words inseparable."<sup>76</sup> Therefore, maintains Warfield, God so framed and moulded the physical, intellectual, and spiritual natures and personalities of the men he had chosen beforehand that they were exactly fitted to be the precise instruments for the reception and transmission of just the message he desired.<sup>77</sup> This process began in his remote ancestors,<sup>78</sup> and was such a total preparation that it included even the prophet's "accomodation" to the speech in which the revelation was to be clothed. Then God framed His own message in the language of the man chosen.<sup>79</sup> How it was transmitted to him, however, is not clear.

The extent to which it is believed that God had absolute control over what the biblical authors wrote is shown by the theories of numerics,<sup>80</sup> which attempt to find intricate patterns and associations of numbers in the Bible in the numbers actually used and in the

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<sup>73</sup>Rimmer, The Harmony of Science and Scripture

<sup>74</sup>Warfield, op. cit., p.173n.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p.153

<sup>76</sup>Rothe, quoted Warfield, op. cit., p.423.

<sup>77</sup>Warfield, op. cit., p.92.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p.157.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p.93.

<sup>80</sup>See, e.g., Filmer, God Counts, K. Sabiers, Astounding New Discoveries, Los Angeles, Robertson Publishing Company.

numerical equivalents of the letters of the text, to prove that there must have been one mastermind behind the writing of every single letter.

It is not denied that there are difficulties in believing the Fundamentalist doctrine of Scripture. But contradictions or errors in the text, if not able to be solved by some kind of exegesis, can always be denied to have been contained in the original manuscript or reserved until a future "state of knowledge" can explain them. Moreover, do not the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, do not the very questions of whether we really exist or anything has real existence beside ourselves, present great perplexity to the mind when men give them their undivided attention? Should we expect otherwise with this doctrine then?<sup>81</sup> "It may sometimes seem difficult to take our stand frankly by the side of Christ and his apostles," says Warfield grandly. "It will always be found safe."<sup>82</sup>

In the favour of Fundamentalism it must be said that at least it is a genuine attempt to exalt the Word of God exclusively, to set up a God-centred authority instead of one conditioned by human presuppositions which vary from era to era, and to objectivise it against the danger of subjectivism. In fact Karl Barth has said that were he forced to choose between its theory of Scripture and the merely historical-critical method he would have no hesitation in choosing its theory.<sup>83</sup> Moreover it did preserve the evangelical gospel through a time when the rest of Protestantism seemed to be succumbing to rationalism; and it has managed to solve some exegetical problems which many non-Fundamentalists reject as contradictions without further ado.<sup>84</sup>

However Fundamentalism fails to realize that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible became hardened into rigid form

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<sup>81</sup> Warfield, op. cit., p.215, 127f.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.128.

<sup>83</sup> K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, London, O.U.P., 1953, p.1.

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., some of the examples in R.A. Torrey, Difficulties in the Bible, Chicago, Moody Press.

in the early Church for exactly the same reason and on the same grounds as the development of the doctrine of an infallible hierarchy, in the attempt to establish an infallible authority to prove that the heresies were wrong.

The criticisms advanced against the Reformer's doctrine of Scripture apply also to Fundamentalism. We need not repeat them here, but we may note that its attempt at objectivisation fails even more than the Reformers'. The assertion that the biblical authors did not fully understand what they were writing and the discarding of the historico-scientific method in finding the meaning of what they wrote in effect result in complete subjectivism: it means that in the interpretation of Scripture "everything depends solely on the dogmatic system which the fundamentalist brings with him when he opens the Bible."<sup>85</sup> Interpreting the Bible as a norm isolated from all Church tradition results in an extravagant abundance of sects: "any part of Scripture or a certain interpretation of a certain text once accepted is proclaimed as the only norm with astounding obstinacy,"<sup>86</sup> whether it stands on the edge of Scripture or not. On the other hand the appeal to the fact that the Church believed in plenary inspiration so long, if pressed, implies that all tradition is infallible and thus leads to Roman Catholicism; and while Warfield spends so much space on showing that the Church believed in the inerrancy of inspiration for so long he is inconsistent in not accepting as well the traditional belief concerning the actual process of inspiration. Both the above theories of inspiration fail, Rimmer's in not accounting for the individual styles of the writers, Warfield's (which is due to a starkly onesided 'Calvinism') in making God's control so ruthlessly absolute that it leaves no room for freewill, i.e., for the sin which did colour the personalities of even the authors of Scripture and therefore must have coloured their "formulation" of the Word of God as well. Moreover even if the

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<sup>85</sup>Schweitzer, "Biblical Theology and Ethics Today," ed. Richardson and Schweitzer, Biblical Authority for Today, p.14.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p.142. Nearly all the modern sects base their *raison d'être* on an interpretation of Scripture which depends on the Fundamentalist doctrine of plenary and infallible inspiration. See also Glasson, Fundamentalism and the Bible, p.10f.

argument that thoughts and words are inseparable is valid, to accept "verbal" inspiration, the idea that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the writer's thoughts but helped them in the choice of the words to express them, is not necessarily to accept inerrant or plenary inspiration, as Baillie points out.<sup>87</sup>

Fundamentalism admits the corruption of the present text but arbitrarily fails to allow for corruption in the copying and transmission of the earlier sources used by the historians of Scripture, and for the fact that the invasions of Israel, the sacking of Jerusalem, the hurried flights and long marches over flood and field, and the imperfect receptacles used to preserve the prophets' sayings resulted in confusion of order, inclusion of anonymous fragments, and repetition of material when the post-exilic scribes attempted to restore them.<sup>88</sup> In fact, however, once it is admitted that the text of the Bible now in our hands is fallible the whole basis of the appeal to it as the infallible word of God crumbles, for who is to say to what extent the text was corrupted between the writing of the original manuscripts and the copies of them now extant?<sup>89</sup> Moreover, if God overruled absolutely in the writing of Scripture why did He not think it important enough to overrule absolutely its preservation, if He wanted us to have an inerrant Book?

Fundamentalism makes faith stand on belief in (the infallible trustworthiness of) the Bible, just as Romanism makes it stand on belief in (the infallible trustworthiness of) the Church. Thus "I must believe that the sun stood still in the Vale of Ajalon, because it says so in the Book, just as much as I must believe that God in Christ forgives me my sin and gives me his love."<sup>90</sup> As we saw in the Introduction the concepts of revelation and of faith in which Fundamentalism results are totally inadequate. It continually threatens to make the Bible the object of instead of the means to faith.

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<sup>87</sup>Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.115.

<sup>88</sup>Sanday, Inspiration, p.239ff.

<sup>89</sup>Rowley, The Relevance of the Bible, p.24.

<sup>90</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.174.

But our starting point must be not, 'Believe in the Bible,' but 'Believe in Christ.' Fundamentalism thinks that once scientific and historical criticism is admitted to the study of the Bible there is no reason left for not surrendering to the most extreme and irresponsible critics who so often cannot even be called Christians. But if we start off with faith in Christ and from this vantage point make our judgments, then, as Brunner puts it, "there is...a 'radicalism' which from the standpoint of faith has once for all become impossible," just as much as there is "a 'conservatism' which has equally become impossible from the point of view of historical criticism."<sup>91</sup>

It is true that the apostles, and perhaps even our Lord Himself, ascribed infallibility to the Scriptures.<sup>92</sup> But we have seen that the apostles did not think of themselves as writing with infallible inspiration; and even if Jesus did ascribe infallibility to the Old Testament this can be explained in that He "emptied Himself" when He was "found in human form." To say that He could not err morally and religiously is not to say that He could not err epistemologically. To flatly identify those two is to say that finitude and creatureliness are the same thing as sinfulness and to imply that He retained His omniscience and so did not take on a truly human nature.<sup>93</sup> The truth is that His attitude to the Old Testament (including His ascription of the Law to Moses and the Psalms to David) was in the same category as His speaking of the sun "rising" etc.

In fact the communication of all revelation between a higher and a lower mind always demands such accommodation.

The teaching which a parent gives to a child must be expressed in the child's language,...thought and experience.... But such accommodation does not in any way mislead the child. Its whole purpose is to convey as clearly as possible such truth as he immediately needs, without confusing his mind with extraneous matter.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.174.

<sup>92</sup>See Chapters II and III, under the sections on 'The Old Testament.' For this reason Brunner's criticism of Fundamentalism as actually "a breach of the Second Commandment" is dangerous (Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.120).

<sup>93</sup>Is it not obvious that our Lord was too much a man to be have been able, for instance, to propound the theory of relativity?

<sup>94</sup>Goudge, "Revelation," E.R.E., Vol.X, p.747b.

In the words of Galileo, "The aim of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Scriptures is much higher than that of teaching us the wisdom of this world." It "is to teach us how we are to reach heaven, and not how the heavens are moved."<sup>95</sup> The very concept of revelation involves the idea that God reveals what is otherwise undiscoverable.

Matters which are discoverable by human reason, and the means of investigation which God has put within the reach of men's faculties, are not the proper subjects of Divine revelation; and matters which do not concern morals, or bear on man spiritual relations towards God, are not within the province of revealed religion.<sup>96</sup>

Because the Church has forgotten this it has waged the bitter war with science which it inevitably loses so long as it refuses to see this principle - a war which has had much to do with the severing of the Church from Western civilization. By having clung to the biblical cosmology of space (against Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton), time (Lyell), and primeval history (Darwin) the Church has already alienated modern man far more than theologians often perceive.<sup>97</sup>

The Fundamentalist's refusal to take the human word of the Bible seriously means that it has little importance for him that the biblical message should be interpreted into the thought of today. Accordingly he merely repeats the sentences and phrases of the Bible, and when modern man cannot understand what he is trying to say he regards this not as a problem for method but as the "stumbling-block" Scripture says the gospel will be for the world. On the other side, modern man, hindered unnecessarily by something which is not the scriptural stumbling-block at all, is confirmed in his suspicion that "Christianity wants nothing but to conserve antiquated ideas and heat them up."<sup>98</sup> Fundamentalism not only refuses to recognize the modern solu-

<sup>95</sup> quoted Brunner, op. cit., p.280.

<sup>96</sup> Quarry, quoted G.A. Smith, The Life of Henry Drummond, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1899, p.242f. See the whole chapter on 'Evolution and Revelation.'

<sup>97</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.276-281, 6. Cf. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, Lecture 2, Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.144.

<sup>98</sup> Schweitzer, op. cit., p.142. Cf. Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.3ff. Contrast the spirit of Paul and John who did not regard the terminology of the Old Testament and the sayings of Jesus as sacrosanct, but attempted to express the essential Word which came through them in the thought forms of those whom they addressed.

tion to difficulties in the Bible, viz., biblical criticism, but the ancient one as well, viz., allegory<sup>99</sup> and thus makes it more difficult than ever for modern man to accept the Word of God.

Fundamentalism often condemns biblical criticism<sup>100</sup> as an invention of the Enlightenment. But already in the early Church, chiefly through the influence of Origen, there was considerable discussion about the authorship, relative value, and contradictions of the Scriptures.<sup>101</sup> Moreover criticism has made the Bible magnificently alive and released many parts of it from obscurity.<sup>102</sup> It is not true to say that it tears the Bible to pieces, leaving a mere tattered patchwork of what was once a glorious unity.

The fact is precisely the opposite. The new approach to the Bible once more integrates the Scriptures, saves us from piecemeal treatment of them, and restores to us the whole book seen as a unified<sup>103</sup> development from early and simple beginnings to a great conclusion.

Warfield's argument that if we cannot accept the Bible's account of one doctrine, viz., inspiration, all that it teaches is impugned is 'prima facie' of great force. But in the end it begs the whole question, On what authority do we believe? Finally, if Jesus had meant us to have an infallible Bible would He not have written it Himself? It is of supreme importance that He did not, however, that, in fact, there is not one single deed or saying we can be positive was precisely His<sup>104</sup> - in order that our religion might find its focal point in no book nor any other creature but only in Jesus Christ Himself, the Risen Lord who speaks His Word to us, a Word that comes to us through the Bible but itself ever remains over and above us.<sup>105,106</sup>

<sup>99</sup> See Fosdick, op. cit., Lecture 3.

<sup>100</sup> It must be admitted, however, that "criticism," and especially "higher criticism," are an unfortunate choice of words which engender prejudice not without reason.

<sup>101</sup> See Dodd, The Bible Today, p.15f.

<sup>102</sup> Brunner, op. cit., p.287.

<sup>103</sup> Fosdick, op. cit., Lecture 1.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought, p.114.

<sup>105</sup> See further the Conclusion.

<sup>106</sup> For the exegetical evidence which makes Fundamentalism impossible see Glasson, Fundamentalism and the Bible, Rowley, The Relevance of the Bible, chapter 5, etc.

THE SCHOOL OF THE INNER LIGHT

What, for lack of a better name, we may call the 'school' of the Inner Light is that body or section of the Church which has emphasized the authority of the inner teaching of the Spirit above the external authority of the Church and the objective authority of the Bible. Usually it has involved a reaction against externalism and formalism (and consequent spiritual laxity) in the Church. But like all movements which place an exclusive emphasis on one aspect of the truth, it has tended to deviate from the Church itself.

Nevertheless it can find its spiritual ancestry in the Old Testament prophets, the men 'par excellence' whose authority was the immediate teaching of the Spirit.<sup>107</sup> This emphasis was revived in the prophets of the New Testament, and again in Montanism towards the end of the second century.<sup>108</sup> The Montanists prized the records of Christ's and the apostles' teachings but believed that the Spirit<sup>109</sup> revealed the "inner meaning" of the Scriptures to them. They claimed direct personal spiritual revelation, and maintained that the Spirit continued to speak through the prophets. Montanus asserted that the Spirit had revealed to him the early end of the world and the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven to be fixed in Phrygia.<sup>110</sup>

The same emphasis continued to be expressed in the mysticism of the Middle Ages, though generally in a less radical form.<sup>111</sup> During the Reformation it broke out again in an extreme form with some of the Anabaptists<sup>112</sup> and other communities formed as offshoots of the Reformation. They believed themselves guided by the Spirit through inward illumination, and a few Anabaptists prophesied the imminent return of Christ and the setting up of the New Jerusalem in Strasbourg or Münster.

<sup>107</sup> See Chapter I, especially the quotation from Edmond Jacob concerning true and aberrant forms of prophecy.

<sup>108</sup> Latourette, op. cit., p.128, Barnett, The Living Flame, p.113f.

<sup>109</sup> Tertullian's phrase, quoted Barnett, op. cit., p.116.

<sup>110</sup> See further Latourette, op. cit., p.128f., Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church, p.108ff., Barnett, op. cit., esp. p.113-128.

<sup>111</sup> Herman, The Meaning and Value of Mysticism, p.285f.

<sup>112</sup> Latourette, op. cit., p.779-790.

In the seventeenth century George Fox founded the Society of Friends, the most enduring of various such bodies which emphasized the Inner Light. For four years Fox had sought religious peace in the established and dissenting Churches, but he did not find it until he received an immediate revelation "not...by the help of man, nor by the letter,...but...in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His immediate spirit and power, as did the holy men of God by whom the Holy Scriptures were written."<sup>113</sup> He claimed to have visions and direct divine illumination and guidance which he called "openings."<sup>114</sup> The Quaker movement was a reaction against the external biblicism and disbelief in immediate revelation of, especially, Puritanism.<sup>115</sup> Having found within themselves the Light which is Christ who is alone sufficient to bring life and salvation they discarded all the "authorities" of men, their teachings, words, "worships," "Temples," creeds, and ministries,<sup>116</sup> seeking to wait upon the Lord in pure silence and make their minds "like a sheet of blank paper,"<sup>117</sup> the better to feel His word in their hearts.

In Chapter III we discussed St Paul's various experiences of the Inner Light in the nature of 'Christ-mysticism' and immediate revelation. Christianity can never despise the notion of immediate revelation, for it itself is built on the foundation of the prophets, and the primitive Church held its own inspired prophets in high honour. Nor can it despise the mystical element in religion. "Let us say it once and for all, that religion is a mystical thing from beginning to end."<sup>118</sup> Without the mystical element Christianity becomes something external, formal, empty, impotent, and self-deceiving. The believer must feel and know in his heart that Christ has risen, must experience

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<sup>113</sup>Fox, Journal, p.20.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., passim.

<sup>115</sup>Braithwaite, "Friends, Society of," E.R.E., Vol.VI, p.142b.

<sup>116</sup>Cf. the quotation from Edward Burrough, Braithwaite, op. cit., p.143a.

<sup>117</sup>Grubb, quoted Braithwaite, op. cit., p.143a.

<sup>118</sup>Duhm, quoted Herman, op. cit., p.289n. Cf. James Stewart: "Every Christian is a mystic" (J. Stewart, A Man in Christ, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1951, p.162. See his whole chapter on 'Mysticism and Morality').

Christ. "It is not enough that thou sayest: Luther, Peter, or Paul has said this, but thou must in thyself feel Christ Himself."<sup>119</sup> Without the work of the Spirit the Scriptures themselves remain veiled. All this is an essential emphasis of which the Church has sometimes needed to be reminded by men like George Fox. In fact we must beware of criticizing too severely even men like Carlstadt and Franck for they belonged to the very school which so largely prepared the way for the Reformation itself.<sup>120</sup>

But when an exclusive stress is laid on the authority of the Inner Light it leads to two distortions. The first is a type of mysticism which threatens to be pantheistic. George Fox himself "had no slight esteem of the Holy Scriptures,"<sup>121</sup> but later a group of Quakers under Elias Hicks repudiated the importance of the person and work of Christ. Such exclusive exaltation of spiritual "experience" of or communion with Christ comes to regard the historical revelation as accidental, as the mere symbol or garment of the experience of the eternal, and recognizes neither the authority of Scripture nor the bond binding men to the Word and fellowship of the Church.<sup>122</sup> It soon comes to hold that it does not matter what people believe so long as they have, or think they have, the right experience.<sup>123</sup> Standing apart from men, apart from the historical revelation, religion thus becomes the union of the alone with the Alone, the absorption of the individual into the Absolute. This is also a way that quickly leads to rationalism, for both it and rationalism are severed from the historical, and the principle of reason easily becomes substituted for the principle of the Inner Light.

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<sup>119</sup>Luther, quoted Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.171 cf. p.180. See also Chapter VI above on Calvin's doctrine of the witness of the Spirit.

<sup>120</sup>Herman, op. cit., p.286.

<sup>121</sup>Fox, Journal, p.20.

<sup>122</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p.147. This is in contrast to the true Christian mystics who "regarded ordinary Christianity as the test of the genuineness of their extraordinary experiences" (Corbishley, "Do the Mystics Know?", Hibbert Journal, October 1951, p.6).

<sup>123</sup>Cf. Davies, The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers, p.55.

The second distortion to which exclusive stress on the authority of the Inner Light leads is one that does not regard the Scriptural revelation as a mere aside, but thinks it insufficient, something to which additions must be made, whether of an explicatory or superseding nature. Such were the actual prophecies of Montanus and the Anabaptists, and "The Book of Adler" which gave Kierkegaard occasion to write on this subject.<sup>124</sup>

Finally, we may note the practical impossibility of making the Inner Light in the individual the only authority. This is evident in history: the Quakers were soon driven to set up the corporate judgment of the community when the views and doings of certain individual members began to embarrass them; they themselves later fell into a rigid traditionalism; and to counter men like Elias Hicks they had to produce official statements of faith.<sup>125</sup> No "experience" as such by itself can be allowed to carry the ultimate authority without opening the doors to complete arbitrariness and subjectivism.<sup>126, 127</sup>

#### RATIONALISM

The line which separates the school of the Inner Light from those who emphasize the exclusive authority of reason is a very tenuous one. The revolt against the external, heteronomous authority of the Church or the infallible Bible in the attempt to make the truth one's own easily becomes an appeal to autonomous human reason as the final authority instead of an inward seeking for the theonomous witness of the Spirit. Hence it is that many of those who during the Reformation broke away from the Church in isolated communities which did not join any of the recognized Protestant Churches can be classi-

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<sup>124</sup> See Croxall, "Kierkegaard and Authority," Hibbert Journal, January 1948.

<sup>125</sup> Braithwaite, op. cit., p.143.

<sup>126</sup> See W.A. Hall, "Religious Experience as a Court of Appeal," Hibbert Journal, Vol.LIII, July, 1955. Hall is wrong, however, in attributing this position to non-Fundamentalist evangelical Protestantism generally.

<sup>127</sup> Schleiermacher and his followers also opened themselves to this danger by trying to derive all the contents of the Christian faith from the experience of the regenerate Christian (See Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.47f.).

fied under either or both schools.<sup>128</sup>

We have seen that from the time of the early Church there has been an element in Christian thought which has exalted reason. Rationalism entered into history with the criticism brought by the Ionian philosophers against the popular mythology of Greece.<sup>129</sup> The early Christian apologists used this appeal to reason in attacking paganism. Justin Martyr, and, much later, theologians of the thirteenth century thought that the whole content of the Christian revelation was potentially discoverable by the unaided human reason.

In the scholasticism of the earlier Middle Ages, however, the application of reason was limited to discussion which took the ultimate beliefs, the "truths of revelation," for granted. Nevertheless, the unprecedented elaboration of formal method that took place as a result of this and the idea of faith as an intellectual assent to "truths," some of which were discoverable by reason, were themselves breeding grounds for the rationalism that was to break out later.<sup>130</sup>

The Renaissance brought with it the movement of thought called humanism, and during the Reformation the school which stressed the authority of reason arose or, for the most part, came by way of humanism.<sup>131</sup> The Anti-Trinitarian Servetus, for instance, was a man whose thought was shaped by the influence of Erasmus.<sup>132</sup>

With the advent of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century and the collapse of the "infallibilities,"<sup>133</sup> Deism emerged with its claim to be a "natural religion" discernible by all men everywhere through their reason. According to Lord Cherbury, who has been

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<sup>128</sup>Latourette, *op. cit.*, p.788.

<sup>129</sup>Wodehouse, "Rationalism," *E.R.E.*, Vol.X, p.581a.

<sup>130</sup>Cf. Whittaker, "Reason," *E.R.E.*, Vol.X and Chapter VI, section 'Revelation and Reason' above.

<sup>131</sup>Latourette, *op. cit.*, p.788. Note that it is here, long before the application of the methods of biblical criticism, that the movement in theological thought which goes variously by the names of 'Liberalism,' 'Modernism,' and 'Unitarianism' arose.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, p.790. This explains why Unitarianism won so many more converts from the Reformed Church, which was much more indebted to humanism than the Lutheran Church (*Ibid.*, p.795).

<sup>133</sup>J. Oman, *Grace and Personality*, London, C.U.P., 1925, chapter 1.

called the father of Deism, there are five essential, innate, and universal propositions of religion, viz., that God exists, that it is man's duty to worship Him, that the proper method of worship is the practice of virtue, that man is under the obligation of repenting for his sins, and that there will be rewards and punishments in the life to come.<sup>134</sup> God was the original Architect of the universe, but once He had set it going it governed itself by inexorable laws and did not need His interference. Everything not discoverable by reason in Christianity was condemned as a corruption of the original "simple" gospel of Jesus. This attitude and the non-recognition of the need of revelation are shown in the titles of the books by John Toland, Christianity not Mysterious (1696), and Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as Creation (1730).<sup>135</sup>

A typical rationalist of the nineteenth century was Hegel. He is the classic example of a man who sought to explain Christianity in terms of a previously constructed speculative system, and resolved the Trinity into the 'thesis, antithesis, and synthesis' of the Absolute.<sup>136</sup> The extreme theological 'liberalism' of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was largely under the influence of rationalism. It denied miracles for the sake of a universal reign of natural law, and reduced Christianity from being the absolute religion to being the highest so far achieved in man's progressive self-realization. Revelation was reduced to discovery, and Jesus became only a Teacher or inspiring example.<sup>137</sup> A typical representative was Martineau who with the help of the Tübingen School came to the conclusion that

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<sup>134</sup> N.H. Robinson, Notes on Deism, Theism, and Pantheism. Cf. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.13-19.

<sup>135</sup> See Bettenson, op. cit., p.426-431.

<sup>136</sup> Mackintosh, op. cit., p.101-117, 142f.

<sup>137</sup> Manson, "The Failure of Liberalism to Interpret the Bible as the Word of God," ed. Dugmore, op. cit., p.93ff. Cf. ibid., p.113 and Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.73.

Christianity as defined or understood in all the churches which formulate it has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources: from what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets.<sup>138</sup>

Christianity can never finally despise reason as such.

Reason has a task in religion both essential and extensive. It exercises a necessary control in weeding and trimming the plant of religion without which it would denegerate into superstition and fanaticism,<sup>139</sup> and the arguments of reason have had real effect in modifying or developing the doctrines of Christianity.<sup>140</sup> Theology itself is an acknowledgement that we must use reason in the service of the Word of God, especially in seeking to translate or interpret the Christian message into modern language and thought concepts.<sup>141</sup>

"Error and confusion result, however, when the role of the intellect is changed from that of control to that of source of knowledge."<sup>142</sup> Religious faith must be open to reason,<sup>143</sup> and may even hope to be sustained by reason to a certain extent, but it never can be born of reason. Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason showed the limitations of reason,<sup>144</sup> and modern thought has returned to Augustine's insight that reason is something that proceeds from the viewpoint of faith. It always proceeds from some faith. Rationalism loves to represent the issue as one of reason versus faith as mere opinion or blind belief.<sup>145</sup> But "the idea of an impartial abstract reason is a mirage, a notable illustration of man's perennial temptation to exalt himself among the gods, knowing good and evil."<sup>146</sup> Our

<sup>138</sup>J. Martineau, The Seat of Authority in Religion (1890), p.649-650, quoted Williams, Authority in the Apostolic Age, p.115.

<sup>139</sup>Söderblom, The Nature of Revelation, p.111.

<sup>140</sup>Wodehouse, op. cit., p.581a.

<sup>141</sup>Cf. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.311, Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, chapter 2, Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.3ff.

<sup>142</sup>Söderblom, op. cit., p.112. *By italics.*

<sup>143</sup>1 Pet.3:15.

<sup>144</sup>Cf. Mackintosh, op. cit., p.19-26.

<sup>145</sup>Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p.242.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p.223.

reason is always conditioned by many things. Hume, Goethe, Rousseau, Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Hobbes, and Cherbury were all products of the Enlightenment, claiming reason as their sole authority, yet none of them agreed philosophically or religiously. Rationalism itself always has a concealed principle of faith, an 'a priori' presupposition. Deism presupposed the contemporary pseudo-scientific picture of the world as well as a watered-down version of what was a specifically Christian conception of God and religion.<sup>147</sup> Liberalism presupposed a humanistic outlook and the relevance of the application of the biological concept of evolution to the spheres of civilization and religion.<sup>148</sup>

We see thus that faith itself cannot be opposed by reason. It can be opposed only by another faith-principle.<sup>149</sup> Moreover reason itself is involved in the fall of man. Thus it is conditioned above all by sin: the slave of self-interest and pride, it inevitably begets false theories, rationalizations, and error of all kinds. Only by the illumination which saving faith brings can it become truly rational. Reason as an authority can to a certain limited extent serve as a judge of religious truth but never as its source.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Paterson, The Rule of Faith, p.90.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. J. Baillie, The Belief in Progress, London, O.U.P., 1951.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Richardson, op. cit., p.235.

<sup>150</sup> See further Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.79-117. It is the authority of what Tillich calls "ontological" reason rather than "technical" reason with which we are primarily concerned here, of course.

## CONCLUSION

Wherein then shall we find final authority? The Bible, the Pope, tradition, the Church, the witness of the Spirit - all these we have found to be fallible. Just as we said that a collection of fallible individuals cannot constitute an infallible organ of authority in the Councils of the Church, so no combination of these fallible authorities can yield us an infallible authority. Does this mean then that there is no final touchstone, no certain authority, no final source and judge of religious truth? Are we forced to admit in the end that everything we believe is after all under a question mark, that it is best characterized as mere opinion rather than certain truth?

If it did we would no longer be able to give Christianity our allegiance. The gospel of Christianity would no longer be good news for it would be uncertain news. And as an answer to the world it would fail completely, for the only gospel that will save the confused world today is one that can be proclaimed with authority.

But there is an answer to our problem. The answer lies in taking seriously the statement that God is the ultimate authority for all religious truth, and therefore as the ultimate authority, is the only ultimate authority. But this statement must be understood in a way radically different to that which it immediately suggests. When we say that God is the only ultimate authority for all religious truth the immediate idea of what is meant replies with the objection, Yes, but we cannot take our questions to God as to an oracle for answers; to try to do so is once more to exalt the Inner Light or the witness of the Spirit in a way that will lead to complete subjectivism. That, however, is to misunderstand what is meant when we say that God is the only ultimate authority. It is to assume that the final authority must be an authority to which man can go and say, "I wish to know the answer: so please tell me while I wait," i.e., it is to assume that the final authority must be in the end man-centred,

instead of perceiving that if the final authority is able and sufficient (as the Person, Almighty God, is) to intervene, to speak the truth, to commission men to proclaim it, and to see that it triumphs over error, then it is not so all-important after all that there be an "infallible" authority to which you or I must be able to go to extract infallible answers. But God's authority cannot be man-centred. It is not necessarily God-as-we-hear-Him, it is not our apprehension of what God says that is the ultimate authority: it is God, God who is always over and above us, God whom we can never grasp or "use" to answer our questions, God whether He has revealed and made certain the truth to us or not.

We can never come to God as we might expect to come to an "infallible" Bible or to a Pope as to an oracle from which we can expect an answer because we seek and ask for it, an answer which, once given, we can sit down and "examine." That is to seek to grasp God, to seek to "use" Him. Yet, wonderful to tell, He may choose to speak to a man of Himself, of His own gracious mercy. It will not be because of anything the man concerned does - it may be that the man is not seeking, even that he does not wish to hear or is rebellious against hearing - but it will be because God chooses to speak that He speaks. And when He speaks it will not be a word that the man who hears it can sit down and examine: it will not be a word that he can seize or take, it will be a Word that will seize him. In that act of revelation that man will have known God speaking His Word to him; and because he has known God speaking it to him that Word will bear for him final authority: it will bear the authority of God. Just as the prophets did not need to "test" the word that had seized them by any Bible or tradition or Pope because they could do no other than know that this was God's Word, so too he will know. God Himself authorizes His Word in the heart of the man to whom He addresses it.

All this means that man cannot expect to know the answer in virtue of his own seeking. He cannot say, I will go to my authority, my Bible, my Pope, my Church, my minister, my "guidance," or "my" God, and make it yield an answer. He may find an answer in this way

but he never will find the answer. Man can never of himself find the true answers in this, the sphere of the ultimate mysteries. Man can know only when God chooses to make him know, when God chooses to speak His Word to him. He gives him to know of His grace. This is the meaning of the sovereignty of God's grace. God gives him to know, but He gives him to know.

The Word spoken by God breaks vertically into human existence from the sphere of the ultimate. But it is addressed to man and in being received by him it takes on the finite, "broken" character of His existence. This is what we mean when we say that the Word is "formulated": it is given a form, a human form. Jesus was "found in human form" when He came to bring the revelation of God to man: similarly the Word God speaks must also assume a human form in coming into man's existence, i.e., in coming to man. It thus becomes "conditioned." This conditioning takes place to a greater and greater degree in various stages:

1. The Word becomes formulated when the man to whom it is originally addressed receives or "hears" it. We may make the analogy of Kant's conception of objects adapting themselves to the 'ap priori' categories of a man's mind in his apprehension of them.
2. It is further "formulated" when he seeks to transmit that Word to others by expressing it in words, whether orally or in writing. In fact it now ceases to be the Word actually addressed by God in the first place and becomes only a formulation of that Word, a form of words (symbols<sup>1</sup>) which points to the original Word.
3. It is then re-formulated in its reception by the person to whom it is transmitted in the second place. This re-formulation is determined by the nature, personality, and thought-processes of the person concerned.
4. It is again re-formulated when transmitted to a third person - and so on 'ad infinitum.'

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Tillich: "Any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic, for a concrete assertion is one which uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about him" (Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.265). But our language is symbolic whenever we speak about the sphere of the unconditioned, not only when we make concrete assertions about it.

The Bible and the creeds, decrees, and doctrines promulgated by Church, Council, and Pope are all "formulations" in either the second or the fourth stage above of a Word originally addressed by God. To seek to make any of these an ultimate or absolute authority is to evoke the prophetic protest which gives God - and His Word, therefore - alone absoluteness.<sup>2</sup> It is to make not the Word but the formulation of that Word, the form which points to it, absolute: it therefore threatens to make an idol. Jesus Himself, as a man partaking of finite human existence, as the incarnate Lord,<sup>3</sup> denied that His authority was ultimate. "I do not speak on my own authority," He said.<sup>4</sup> Even the words of Jesus cannot be made the final and ultimate authority. To make them that, or to make the Bible or the Pope that, is docetism. It is to say that the Word which comes from the sphere of the ultimate only seems to take on a form conditioned by the finiteness and "brokenness" of human existence.<sup>5</sup> Further, it is to create a heteronomy. "Heteronomy is the authority claimed or exercised by a finite being in the name of the infinite."<sup>6</sup> A heteronomy always threatens to substitute an intellectual assent to dogma or "truths" imposed from without for the faith that is the gift of God. A man might go to his Bible or his Pope for an answer, but he would only be "told" or informed: he might assent to, or he might question, the word proffered to him, but he still would not have that gift of the Spirit which is a theonomous faith in the Word of God, a faith that knows. He would not have the knowledge which occurs when His Spirit beareth witness with our spirit. When finite or relative authorities are made absolute or ultimate they unavoidably intellectualise revelation and "dismember the existential correlation between the revelatory event and those who are asked to receive it."<sup>7</sup> The revelatory event is the hearing

<sup>2</sup>Cf. P. Tillich, The Protestant Era, London, Nisbet, 1955, p.226.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Jn.4:24, R.S.V.: "God is Spirit."

<sup>4</sup>Jn.14:10; cf. 7:17f.

<sup>5</sup>Contrast Paul's view of our knowledge of the ultimate things as conditioned and "broken" (I Cor.13:9-10,12).

<sup>6</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.164.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.161f.

of God's Word immediately, i.e., in the first stage above.

All this is not to suggest that the way to find the finally true and authoritative answer is to wait upon God 'in vacuo' for Him to speak to us, lest we wrongly exalt the "formulation" of the Word to the highest. No, for it is through the formulation (though only through the formulation) that God speaks to us, whether through preaching or a personal witness by some Christian or a written word, either in the Bible or another Christian book - and when He speaks through the formulation it is again His Word as received in the first stage described above. That is why the Bible and tradition, creed and Council are so important. They formulate the Word given by God. Through that formulation God can then speak His Word directly to the individual. Hence it is that correct formulation is so essential if the true Word is to come through it, and hence also that it is always through the Bible and through the Church that God speaks. But the primary formulation must remain the Bible, for God originally spoke His saving Word and wrought the salvation which it proclaimed in event and the Bible is the formulation of the original Word as it came to those present at the event. Councils may nevertheless serve to formulate that Word more explicitly in certain respects and in terms which might be more adequate, especially for their own time; and their formulations may be as absolute as the Bible is as a formulation, i.e., as absolute as a conditioned formulation can be, but this only if the Word they formulate is that which God addresses to them, immediately, through the Scriptural formulation. If a Council merely re-formulates the scriptural formulation, i.e., if its formulation belongs to stage four above instead of stage two, then it is conditioned and relative to a much greater extent, to an extent that may even make it false,<sup>8</sup> and cannot be as binding as the scriptural formulation. The fact that it can never be proved, however, whether the Council made its formulation at stage two or stage four, and the further fact that there is a dan-

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<sup>8</sup>The 21st Article of the Church of England states that General Councils "may err, and sometimes have erred." Even the Roman Church acknowledges this.

ger that high officers of the Church may be spiritually-poor, perhaps even cut off from God, further show the necessity for making the Scriptures the primary formulation.

Yet Councils remain the best means of solving disputes in the Church. This is because the Word in being heard is conditioned firstly by the finiteness of human existence, secondly by the emphases and distortions which belong to the thought of an age, thirdly those which belong to the thought of an area (or denomination), and fourthly those which belong to the thought of an individual (as the unique personality that he is). Naturally, then, in an ecumenical council much of this conditioning will cancel itself out, as it were, and though the formulation may thus become less comprehensive it will probably be more central. Moreover the Spirit, and therefore the guidance of the Spirit, has been promised and given to the Church as a whole in a special way.

Here too we see the relevance of tradition: it helps to overcome the conditioning dependent on the age, and can also be a more explicit and adequate formulation of some of the implications of the original Word than the Bible itself, thus guiding us at points where the Bible alone is not sufficient. Yet it also has its own danger: that of stifling the living, immediate Word by the recollection of the past occasions on which it was heard.<sup>9</sup>

It is, therefore, a serious matter for an individual or a minority to take their stand against the body of the Church or the body of tradition, more serious than one can use words to describe. It may yet be, however, that the individual is in the right and the Church or the tradition in the wrong. This occurs when God's Word is stifled in the organized Church, perhaps by traditionalism, and He has to raise up anew a prophet so that through him He can speak His true Word to the Church again. Nevertheless the individual can never become a new apostle. Whether he be Pope or Luther or Fox he

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. R. Prenter, "A Lutheran Contribution," ed. Richardson and Schweitzer, Biblical Authority for Today, p.110.

may strive only to restore the original apostolic Word, i.e., the Word that came originally through the apostles. As we have seen, the apostolic office was a unique one, confined to a unique period in history. The apostolic formulation must always remain the primary formulation and therefore cannot be changed or added to.<sup>10</sup> If we may use an illustration, the Church is a great company standing in a line which stretches from its pivot which is Christ. The apostles hold Christ with one hand and the rest of the Church with their other hand. The early, post-apostolic Church holds the apostles with one hand and the rest of the Church with the other. The line in which the whole Church stands (and of which the ministry is the formal continuation, whether we call it apostolic succession or not) should be straight, in the same direction in which it started, but sometimes owing to the temptations on either side of it it becomes crooked. Because of the mists of time the Church does not realize this and may insist that it still stands in a straight line. Thus sometimes God has to give a man, by His grace, a vision which enables him to see that those among whom he stands are not in the original direction of the line started by Christ and the apostles (because it takes two points or men in a line before its direction is determined we can never go behind the apostles' interpretation of the One who stands behind them as though the original direction could be found in that One). Ordinarily the Church is the means of telling us whether we stand in the line, for we would seek to align ourselves with it. If any man on his own denies that the Church is standing where it should as radically as Luther did, therefore, that is a very grave charge, a charge he should avoid making at

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<sup>10</sup>The danger of such an extreme approach to the Bible as Bultmann's theories of demythologization is that it not only seeks to interpret the formulation of the Word by the apostles (which the theologian must seek to do for his age) but radically discredits the formulation itself. See I. Henderson, Myth in the New Testament (Studies in Biblical Theology, No.7), London, S.C.M., 1952, Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (Dogmatics Vol.II), London, Lutterworth, 1955, Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.283-285, 396-412, ed. Richardson and Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 146f., 223-225. (The same applies also to such approaches as that of the extreme 'liberalism' exhibited in the writings of Loisy and Barnes, for instance).

all costs if, humanly speaking, he can. Yet when God speaks to a man as He did to Luther, giving him such a vision as we have discussed - or, of course, when a man is utterly deluded into thinking he has been given such a vision - then there is nothing that will persuade him to stifle the command or the urge to make the charge. Yet when God does give a man such a vision it is always to bring the Church back into the true line. This does not mean that He wishes to have the whole Church become Protestant or Methodist or Quaker. The spiritual results of these movements are not necessarily measured by the number of adherents they win but by their ever-increasing influence in all the denominations, by means of which God seeks to bring the whole Church back into line with His true Word. This is not to deny, however, that the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, has not absorbed enough the influence of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith, as we would affirm from the Protestant point of view.

In all this we see that it is the Word of God addressed to the individual that is the finally authoritative Word. Not the Scriptures, not the ministry of the Church, but the Word addressed by God through them is finally authoritative. It is the finally authoritative content, the finally authoritative truth, because its authority is the ultimate and final authority of the God who addresses it to the individual in His Spirit.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth," said Jesus.<sup>11</sup> But because the Spirit bloweth where He listeth He cannot be confined or limited by the ecclesiastical or the traditional. The chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up to Jesus and said to Him, "Tell us what authority you have."<sup>12</sup> Of their own authority they were sure. The chief priests if questioned would have said, "Our authority is a tradition which goes back without interruption to Moses and Aaron, into the line of which we have been consecrated." The scribes would have said, "Our authority is the

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<sup>11</sup>Jn.16:13.

<sup>12</sup>Lk.20:1ff.

Scriptures which we have studied until we are experts in its interpretation." But who was Jesus? Who was this man who was neither consecrated into the priesthood nor recognized by the scribes as one of themselves? What was His authority that He had acted without their approval and upset the tables in the Temple and driven out the money-changers and the sellers of pigeons who were so necessary to the sacrifices and the cultus? By what authority did He turn against the religion as it had been handed down to them by their forefathers? they would have asked.

But Jesus did not answer their question by pointing to any "infallible" authority. Instead He asked them a question: "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" To this they could not answer. If they had said that it was from men they would have hurt a feeling that John was a prophet after all. But if they said from God they would have been establishing an authority beyond the "infallible" authorities they acknowledged, the authorities they claimed for themselves. And that they did not want to do. They demanded that all authority be vested in them. Therefore they did not accept John as a prophet nor Jesus as the Messiah. They denied the possibility of a Word guaranteed by its own intrinsic authority, the transcendent authority of God addressing it immediately.<sup>13</sup>

We do the same whenever we make the Bible, the Church Fathers, the popes, the reformers, the creeds into ultimate authorities. All these authorities point towards the ultimate authority which does break through them again and again, but they in themselves are broken and conditioned. Not even an apostle can do more than point to the Word which bears its own intrinsic and ultimate authority; not even an apostle can claim for himself an infallible ultimate authority. "Even if we," said St Paul, "or any angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed."<sup>14</sup> When any of these conditioned authorities claim ul-

<sup>13</sup>I owe the idea of this illustration to Paul Tillich's sermon, "By What Authority?", The New Being, London, S.C.L., 1956.

<sup>14</sup>Gal. 1:8.

ultimate significance for themselves and their "formulations" of the Word of God, whenever they make themselves unconditional, they cease to point towards the Word of which the authority is God but instead point towards themselves. When all these conditioned authorities are made rigidly infallible and absolute (as in Roman Catholicism), then, how much do they not threaten to block God's Word's being spoken through them? And when one of these conditioned authorities is isolated from the others and made ultimate at the same time (as in 'orthodox' Protestantism) how much that can help the hearing and true interpretation of the Word is not discarded? Those who make any of these ultimate in effect are saying that it is these which give them the true Word, the answer to their questions. But the truth is that it was only through these that the Word came to them originally, and if they define any as ultimately authoritative it is only because that which is defined best seems to support the Word which came to them in the first place as they interpret it now.

To assert that any 'norm' of the Word is ultimately authoritative is to do the same thing. When Ritschl made the events the ultimate authority he failed to discern fully that it was the Word that came through the events when they occurred (i.e., that came to the prophets and apostles) that was the ultimate authority. Barth, on the other hand is right in seeing that the ultimate norm is the Word of God, but he is wrong in identifying that norm with the Bible. In other words he makes the Bible the norm of the Word instead of the Word the norm of the Bible. The Bible itself is a "broken" authority which can only point to the Word which comes through it. That is why we find different "theologies" in the Bible, even in the New Testament. Whenever Scripture is asserted to be the ultimate authority normative authority is claimed not for Scripture as a whole but for a particular content of it, in any event. We have already noted Tillich's point that the Bible itself cannot be called the norm.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand Luther's criterion of justification by faith was his own formulation of the Word that came to him through Scripture: it cannot serve

<sup>15</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p.56. Cf. Chapter VI above.

as a norm for others. In fact it was not the formulation but the Word itself so far as he himself perceived it that was really Luther's own norm, and in formulating it he was only seeking to make a means through which the Word itself could come to others as it had come to him. Only the Word itself can be the norm, which means only the Word spoken by God to the individual. Tillich's norm of the "New Being in Jesus as the Christ"<sup>16</sup> is partly a formulation of the Word as it came to him, and partly a profound suggestion as a keynote for the proclamation of the Word to the contemporary world, i.e., what must be a keynote in our approach, whether in preaching or in apologetics, to the contemporary situation. But it cannot be the only keynote. As George Thomas points out, the other keynotes (he also calls them norms) cannot be replaced by this one as alone important for contemporary man.<sup>17</sup> That is because they are all broken (and therefore different) formulations which can only point to the Word which comes through them but which remains over and above them.

The Word itself is in the end the only final norm there can be. The Word which comes through the Bible and through doctrine must remain the norm of the Bible and of doctrine. The Word is its own norm and must burst any finite norm. Were it possible that any finite norm could be a final criterion it would mean that we could grasp it and say, Here it is: assent to it. The Word which is the truly ultimate norm, however, is something which always remains over and above and beyond us; it is that which points at us and grasps us.

The Word can never be formulated in a finally adequate way by any theology. Did it consist of mere abstract "truths" this would be possible and then there would be possible a permanent orthodoxy. The mistake of all orthodoxies is that they do not recognize the impossibility of this. But the Word is something transcendent, something that comes vertically from the sphere of the ultimate into the sphere of human existence, and its formulations in terms and sym-

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<sup>17</sup>G. Thomas, "The Method and Structure of Tillich's Theology," ed. Kegley and Bretall, The Theology of Paul Tillich, New York, Macmillan, 1952, p.97.

bols which belong to the sphere of that existence are necessarily "conditioned" distortions of it. Moreover the Word is existentially received and can therefore never be reduced to intellectual or abstract terms. This is the danger of all "systems" of theology, in so far as the theologian is not aware that his system is a distortion. The modern theologian seeks to conform everything contained in the Word to the Procrustean bed of his system (which so often becomes his ultimate authority just as the Bible becomes the ultimate authority of the Fundamentalist, and a much inferior authority than the Fundamentalist's because it involves so much more the subjective aspect); but every system inevitably distorts the Word and therefore proves transient itself, lasting only until the Word bursts its confines at some point or another. The theology of paradox is in part a recognition of this.

The question may still remain: How shall the individual know what the authoritative Word of God is (whether in answer to the fundamental question, How can I be saved?, or in answer to other less fundamental but still important questions pertaining to God's revelation)? How did Luther know? How did Paul know? They knew when God spoke His Word to them - spoke it through the written apostolic formulation of the Word in the one instance, and through event and apostolic 'paradosis' in the other, but spoke His Word. Neither the Church nor the Bible can tell the individual finally whether Luther was right in his revolt against the Church's teaching in his day, for instance. Only God can, in speaking the Word He spoke to Luther in the heart of the individual. A man cannot learn that Word, or learn how true it is, by assenting to what any "authority" teaches him: he can learn that only when God chooses to speak it to him in his heart. He cannot learn it of himself (if he could it would be only an achievement, a work of the law): he can learn it only of God's grace, of God's sovereign grace.

How then can I know what God's Word is in answer to the question with which I am faced? If nothing I can do can contribute to my hearing that Word must I just despair until He perhaps chooses

to speak to me one day? No. You are confronted by a formulation of that Word in the Church to which you belong, and by its primary formulation in the Bible, above all in the New Testament which was formulated when the saving Word was complete. You must seek God's Word through the Church. But it is God's Word that you must seek: therefore you must go through the Church to that which stands behind it, the scriptural formulation of the Word as interpreted from the point of view of the Word formulated in the New Testament. But it is God's Word spoken to you that you must seek: therefore you must seek to hear it through the Scriptures as well. The Scriptures in themselves and the Church in itself cannot give you that Word. They can only offer formulations which may even tempt you to give them assent. But "when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed."<sup>18</sup> i.e., when God Himself speaks the Word it ceases to be a formulation and you see the true Word behind the formulation, and this happens - it becomes God's Word to you - when you are in the existential relationship which enables you to receive it. We saw in the Introduction that God's Word is truth-received-existentially when one is in an I-thou relationship with Him. "If any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God."<sup>19</sup> Come to God in the existential attitude which seeks only to know His truth and do His will, which comes in prayer and humble obedience,<sup>20</sup> seeking to be addressed with His Word by His grace through the formulations of it in tradition, preaching, and Scripture.<sup>21</sup> His grace

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<sup>18</sup> II Cor. 3:16.

<sup>19</sup> Jn. 7:17, R.S.V.

<sup>20</sup> It is common experience that when Christians are not in this existential relationship, i.e., when they are proud or disobedient, they begin to doubt even the most fundamental issues of the Christian faith. This is because they become "deaf" to the Word which is received existentially.

<sup>21</sup> Often theologians, for instance, think this not necessary. Thus their theologies have been formulations which like the decrees of some of the Councils discussed above belong to the fourth instead of the second stage of "formulation," and have misled the Church. For this reason we must vehemently disagree with Brunner when he says, "The idea that a good theologian must eo ipso also be a good Christian, or even a Christian believer at all, is a terrible misunderstanding" (Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, p.421). One cannot be a good theologian without being a good Christian, without being one who through obedience and prayer himself hears direct from God the Word to which he seeks to give formulation. Reginald Tocco, a disciple of St Thomas Aquinas, wrote of his master,

remains sovereign, and He must elect to speak before you will hear. Thus your prayer and obedience, your existential relationship, can never be an offering or a work which will induce Him to speak. In fact there are some to whom He has spoken when they did not come seeking in this way, and all Christians know that He sometimes speaks when we do not wish to hear what He says. But, wonderfully, when we do seek truly to draw nigh to Him in this way by His grace He does choose to draw nigh to us, according to His love for us. When He speaks we know, for the act of revelation involves the I-thou relationship in which we hear God speak, and there can be no higher authority for His Word than that.

The Word of God may contradict the formulation of it offered by the Church if that formulation is one belonging to the fourth "stage" we discussed above, but it will never contradict its primary formulation in the Scriptures in so far as that is a symbol pointing to the Word and not a definition of it. That is, it may contradict certain things in the formulation as it is spoken through that formulation to us today, but those things will have belonged essentially to the formulation, i.e., to the conditioning due to the formulation as such, and not to the Word itself. The essential Word itself that comes through the formulation cannot contradict the Word that came to those who originally formulated it, as God spoke it to them through event, though it may contradict certain transient things even in their formulation of it.

True, this leaves room for the danger that a man may erroneously be persuaded that he has heard a Word from God that contradicts something that in fact belongs to the essential Word. But because men are finite and fallible this will always happen in any event, whether we try to make the Bible an authority infallible in every

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It was not so much to the effort of his mind that he was beholden for his learning as to the force of his prayers. Whenever he wanted to study, to debate, to teach, to read or to write, he would first have recourse to the secrecy of prayer, in tears before God to discover in truth the divine secrets, and the result of his prayer was that...he came away instructed. (Quoted J. Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas, London, Sheed & Ward, 1948, p.20).

detail or not. It is the source of all false doctrine. The difference between Saul who set out for Damascus and Paul who set out for Asia to proclaim no other gospel save Jesus Christ and Him crucified was not that he had found an infallible "authority" to test what was God's will and Word in the second instance and not in the first; it was not even that he was unsure of what God's will was in the first instance. The difference was simply that God had spoken to him. In both instances he was sure: not even your or my assurance is or can be in the end the ultimate authority. But in the one God had truly spoken to him; God alone remains the ultimate authority.

When a man is wrong, is deluded about God's Word, that does not mean that we must despair of him. True, we can never convince him of the truth by reference to any "infallible" authority; he cannot of himself come to the knowledge of the Word which God speaks and neither we nor any other man can bring him there. He can come to know God's saving truth only if He brings him to know it by His grace. But if we do not despair of him we may nevertheless seek that through our words (formulations) - and through our prayers - God may speak His Word to that man; for God cannot speak His true Word except through (our) correct formulations.

All that we have said so far indicates that the little emphasis upon the function of the Holy Spirit in all the modern Churches (excepting the Pentecostalists) is a grave and fundamental lack. It is a lack that has made the Spirit so "unreal" in our thought and experience that it has made us forget the reality of His immediate authority and begin thinking in terms of external authorities such as the Bible or the Pope. Yet what we have said in this Conclusion is not a reassertion of the doctrine of the Inner Light as the Quakers proclaim it. It is a transformation of that doctrine and of the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, but it is not a reassertion of either as they are commonly understood. For one thing it is not a Scripture, something which belongs to the sphere of human existence and which can be objectively "examined" that is authorized to us.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>As in Calvin's doctrine of the witness of the Spirit.

But, above all, there is a difference between saying that the light or even the Spirit-as-experienced-by-us is the final authority and saying that the Spirit, as God apart from the existence of men but breaking into human existence from the ultimate, is the final authority. In the first of these two understandings of the matter we may dare to claim that our "experience" of the light or the witness is the final authority, and on the basis of having brought such and such truth to the touchstone of our "experience" we may claim final authority for them. This is subjectivism. But it is not subjectivism to maintain that God as He moves in His Spirit, the God who is always transcendent, over and above us, speaking His Word as He wills, is the ultimate authority, to maintain that we can never "use" or grasp Him and say thereby that He has witnessed something to us, but that by His grace He may elect to speak His Word to us and authorize it in our hearts. In the first understanding we claim an infallible man-centred authority or "touchstone", in the second we pray humbly that we may be of those to whom God chooses to speak. When He does choose to speak, moreover, the person whom He addresses will know, will be certain that it is God's Word, because God Himself will have authorized it in his heart, but he may not even be able to express 'how' God did it, let alone begin to claim his "experiences" as infallible. Further, when he himself begins to proclaim that Word he should not seek to "prove" it by reference to any "infallible" authority - whether an "experience" or a written word - but leave it to God to authorize the Word he proclaims to the hearts of those who hear him by Himself speaking through his words. This is not to mean that he should not use the Bible, or that those who hear him do not have to experience the Word for themselves, but that it is only God speaking through the Bible that can become the final, ultimate authority for them as well. When God does speak no one can know that it is His Word save He Himself and the man to whom He speaks it. It cannot be 'proved' to be His Word.

We have now attempted to work out anew an answer to the problem of authority, and to relate it to the questions concerning

the roles of the non-ultimate authorities, the Bible, the Church, tradition, and the Inner Light. No return to the Bible as an ultimate authority, no return to the Church as one, no return to subjective "experiences" of the Inner Light as an ultimate authority can bring men to receive the Word that God speaks, but only an outpouring of His Spirit by His grace. And no exaltation of any so-called "infallible" authority will keep the Church hearing the true Word; only God Himself can do that. But by His grace He will see that His Word is always heard by His Church, for He is a gracious God, and a God who is sufficient to do this, having chosen to do so. The denial that God's Word, the true Word, will persist being heard unless we make the Bible or the Pope or the Inner Light an infallible authority is a denial that God who is over and above all exists or is able to speak to us. It is to refuse to trust that Him Himself will make His Word triumph. But "God is Spirit,"<sup>23</sup> is other than and greater than all other authorities, and no authority belonging to the sphere of finite human existence, neither Bible nor pope nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the Word of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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<sup>23</sup>Jn.4:24, R.S.V.

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