

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Authority Is Defined As, "The Liberty Of Doing As One Pleases; The Right To Exercise The Power Of Authority; The Power Of Rule Or Government; The Power Of One Whose Will And Commands Must Be Obeyed By Others." (W. E. Vine)
- B. Although Authority In Religion Has Been Assumed By Different Individuals And Systems, Is It Right? E.g.
1. The "authority" of the Pope.
 2. The "authority" of the Church.
 3. The "authority" of the Synod or Council.
 4. The "authority" of:
 - a. Herbert W. Armstrong - World-wide Church of God.
 - b. Ellen G. White - Seventh-day Adventism.
 - c. Joseph Smith - The Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints.
 - d. Charles T. Russell - Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - e. Muhammad - Islam.
 - f. Gautama Buddha - Buddhism.

NOTE: The list is endless!

II. AIM.

- A. To Understand That A Perfect Religion Must Have A Perfect Authority.
- B. To Realize That All Must Respect That Authority In Genuine Submission And Loving Obedience.

NOTES: 3 TYPES OF AUTHORITY

- 1) Basic - Asks or Consults with
no one.
- 2) Delegated - Told To Do.
- 3) Usurped - Theft, robbing

III. OUTLINE.

A. THE CLAIMS OF MEN: A DECEPTIVE AUTHORITY.

1. One's *conscience* is his authority.

a. Conscience, the sense or feeling of right and wrong within a person, is not a safe and reliable guide. *Jer. 10:23*

1) Conscience may be misdirected. (*Acts 23:1 cf. 1 Tim. 1:13-16*)

2) Conscience may be weak and defiled. (*Titus 1:15*)

3) Conscience may be hardened. (*1 Tim. 4:2 Prov. 16:1*)

b. Conscience acts in accordance to one's knowledge.

1) Conscience does not inherently determine right or wrong.

2) Conscience merely approves or disapproves when one acts according to that which he believes to be right or wrong.

3) Conscience may or may not be smitten by offering one's own child to the crocodile gods of the Ganges River: It hinges upon one's knowledge and belief!

c. Conscience, therefore, cannot be the source of authority in true religion.

NOTE: A pure conscience is one that is educated in the teaching of Christ Jesus and cleansed by His blood. (*1 Tim 3:9; Heb. 9:14 cf. 1 Pet. 3:20-21*)

2. One's *religious experience and feeling* is his authority.

a. Religious experience and feeling are undefinable: "I know how I feel but I can't explain it."

- b. One's religious experiences and feelings are based merely upon emotions (i.e. love, hate, joy, grief, etc.)
 - 1) How can one *know* that his feeling is of a "religious nature" or "purely emotional"?
 - 2) Personal feelings concerning a religious experience places the authority upon one's individual judgment: But man's judgment is liable to error!
 - c. To rely upon one's feelings or religious experience leaves one in ignorance as to whether his experience is actually based upon known fact: Therefore, human emotions and/or experiences must be rejected as a reliable source of authority.
3. One's *direct or special revelation* is his authority. *2 Thes 2:9-11 ; Gal 1:6-9*
- a. If God is actually revealing His will in a direct and special way to certain individuals, why do these individuals found different and conflicting religions?
 - 1) Joseph Smith claimed direct revelation - produced Mormonism!
 - 2) Ellen G. White claimed direct revelation - produced Seventh-day Adventism!
 - 3) Mary Baker Eddy claimed direct revelation - produced Christian Science!
 - b. Every religious delusion the world has ever known has been founded upon the unauthorized notion that the claimant had received a special or direct revelation from God! (Consider *2 Thess. 2:9-11*)
 - 1) Is God the author of such religious confusion? (*1 Cor. 14:33*)
 - 2) Is the Holy Spirit of truth the revealer of contrary and conflicting ideas? (*John 16:7-15*)

c. So called "special direct revelations" by their very nature could never be *the authority* in pure and true religion: Therefore, this too, must be rejected. (Consider carefully *Gal. 1:6-9*)

4. One's own reason is his authority.

a. If the mind or intellect of man is his only authority and is trustworthy:

1) Why will one person follow his reason (unaided from God's revelation, the Bible) to one conclusion and another person to an entirely different conclusion?

2) Why does one's reasoning (unaided from God's revelation, the Bible) lead him to incorrect and imperfect conclusions concerning moral values and standards?

b. Perfect truth is not inherent in the human mind: Absolute, objective truth must be revealed by Him who is truth. (Read *John 1:17; 14:6; 17:17*)

c. Therefore, unaided human reason is an unsafe and unreliable guide as the source for authority in true religion; it cannot be accepted.

B. THE CLAIM OF GOD: A DEFINITIVE AUTHORITY.

1. Jesus Christ has all authority.

a. *Matt. 17:1-5.*

b. *Acts 3:22-23.*

c. *Matt. 28:18.*

2. Jesus Christ's authority placed in His words.

a. *Matt. 7:24-29.*

b. *John 12:48-50.*

3. Jesus Christ's all-authoritative word given to His disciples.

- a. *John 17:8, 14, 18.*
 - b. *John 14:25-26; 15:26; 16:12-13.*
4. Jesus Christ's all-authoritative word is all-sufficient.
- a. *John 20:30-31.*
 - b. *Eph. 3:3-4.*
 - c. *2 Tim. 3:16-17. (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3)*
5. Jesus Christ's all-authoritative word must be respected.
- a. *John 12:48-50. (cf. Matt. 15:9)*
 - b. *1 Pet. 4:11. (cf. 2 John 9-11)*
 - c. *1 Cor. 4:6. (cf. Gal. 1:6-9)*

NOTE: Meditate upon *Rom. 11:22; Heb. 2:1-4; 10:28-32; 12:28-29.*

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. It Is The Creator Of Us All Who Has Given Us The Perfect Authority: *"All Authority Has Been Given Unto Me In Heaven And On Earth." (Matt. 28:18)*
 - 1. Jesus Christ has ALL authority.
 - 2. This being so, it leaves no authority in the part, or in the whole, to anyone else regardless of one's vain assumptions.
- B. We All Should Thank God That He Has Not Left Us Without An Authoritative Guide: Jesus (And His Word) Is *The Way, The Truth And The Life. (John 14:6; 17:17)*