

What are two sides of authority?

- The right or power to rule
- To act by the instruction and/or approval of the rightful ruler

If we're concerned about authority, we're going to be concerned with...

- God's rule and His instruction and His law
- What I must do and what I can do



Is there an ultimate source of authority? (ultimate: primary, first, beginning)

- Yes.

What are the two possibilities for a source of authority?

- Divine or Human. Matthew 21:23-27

What is the implication if divine?

- We need to obey it. Matthew 21:23-27

Roadmap

- ✓ What is authority, and how is the word used in the Scriptures?
- ✓ We need authority in our lives
- ✓ God is the ultimate authority
- **What our source and standard of authority is not**
- How is God's authority expressed to man
- Respecting God's silence
- Using the inductive method to determine the will of God
- Determining God's will through commands, statements, examples, and necessary conclusions
- The Scriptures give us a pattern
- Generic and Specific authority
- Expediency
- Examples of respect and disrespect of authority
- Improper attitudes and assaults upon authority



Lesson 4: What the Source and Standard of Authority is Not

We saw in lesson 3 that there must be an ultimate source of authority, and that ultimate source of authority is God.

In lesson 4, let us examine some of the sources or standards deemed authoritative by some for their religious teachings and practices. We want to see that these are not the source or standard of authority for religious teaching and practice.

By “source,” we mean origin

By “standard,” we mean the authoritative rule to follow and measure by



Old Testament practices are not our source of authority today

Why not?

- ❑ For a specific people for a specific time
 - ❑ Deuteronomy 5:1-3
 - ❑ Galatians 3:19
- ❑ The law of Moses was only a shadow
 - ❑ Hebrews 10:1ff
- ❑ The old covenant was removed when Christ died on the cross
 - ❑ Ephesians 2:14-16
 - ❑ Colossians 2:14-17
- ❑ If going to keep some, then bound to keep all
 - ❑ Galatians 5:3



Old Testament practices are not our source of authority today

Examples

- Tithing

- Instruments of music in worship

- Divorce law of Deuteronomy 24

- Sabbath

- In the early days of the church, not recognizing that the law of Moses was no longer binding led to problems in the church

 - Acts 15:1, 24

 - Galatians

- Problems still continue today

 - How important then is to recognize this truth?

The Pope is no source of authority

- ❑ “Vicar of Christ (Lat. Vicarius Christi), a title of the pope implying his supreme and universal primacy, both of honor and of jurisdiction, over the Church of Christ.”
(from Catholic Answers,
<https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/vicar-of-christ>)
- ❑ Ephesians 1:21-23
- ❑ How much of the religious world follows the pope as their source of authority in religion?

Roman Catholicism

(From Steve Fontenot's *Authority Class*, 2010)

“Both Catholics and Protestants refer to the Holy Spirit, but the latter take the view that each one individually may speak from subjective experience (and relying on that experience may even place themselves in opposition to the Church!), whereas Catholics consistently rely upon the authority of the Church herself over her members. ‘Go and teach.’ It is the Church who teaches and the faithful who listen.” (*A Handbook of the Catholic Faith*, p. 140)

“For the Scripture is not like other books. Dictated by the Holy Ghost, it contains things of the deepest importance, which in many instances are very difficult and obscure. To understand and explain such things there is always the required coming of the same Holy Spirit.” (*The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XII*, Benziger Bros., New York, p. 277)



Roman Catholicism

“Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.” *(DOGOMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION, SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI ON NOVEMBER 18, 1965, Chapter 2, No.9)*



Roman Catholicism

“The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by divine commission and WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. “It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church...are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.” (*The Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 117-118).

Commenting on Ac 8:26-40, Catholicism says, “Although these writings were inspired, their supernatural contents were often above the readers’ comprehension.” (*A Handbook of Catholic Faith*, p. 143) Thus the need for “The Teaching Office of the Church” under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. See also *The Question Box*, p. 328.



Elders are not the standard of authority

- ❑ Elders are to tend the flock among them and exercise oversight
 - ❑ 1 Peter 5:2
 - ❑ Acts 20:28
- ❑ Those under their oversight are instructed to “obey those who rule over you”
 - ❑ Hebrews 13:17; 7, 24
- ❑ However, elders are under the authority of Christ
 - ❑ Ephesians 5:24
 - ❑ 1 Peter 5:4
- ❑ Consider the idea of “delegated” authority

Elders are not the standard of authority

- ❑ Recognize:
 - ❑ Acts 20:30
 - ❑ 1 Timothy 5:17-20
- ❑ Does this call for disrespect and skepticism? Of course not.
- ❑ But we cannot say, “regardless of what the elders say or do, we must follow that”

Preachers are not the standard of authority

- ❑ Preachers are to preach the word of God
 - ❑ 2 Timothy 4:1-2
- ❑ But we need to compare what is preached to the authoritative word of God
 - ❑ Acts 17:11
 - ❑ Galatians 1:6-9
- ❑ Listen with skepticism and doubt? Of course not.
- ❑ But we cannot say, “whatever the preacher says, that I will follow”

The creeds of men are no source or standard of authority

- ❑ Teaching commandments of men results in vain worship
 - ❑ Matthew 15:9
- ❑ Creeds of men will plunder your faith
 - ❑ Colossians 2:8, 20-22
- ❑ The creeds of men may be subtle
 - ❑ Colossians 2:4
 - ❑ 2 Corinthians 11:3
- ❑ We must reject the creeds of men, whether written or unwritten. Reject their councils. Accept the Bible only.
- ❑ How much of the religious world meets in councils and publishes and propagates their creeds?

The desires of the congregation are not the standard of authority

- ❑ The desires of the congregation are only proper and right if they are according to the Scriptures
- ❑ Here are some desires; are they right?
 - ❑ 1 Corinthians 5:1-2
 - ❑ 2 Timothy 4:3-4
- ❑ What if...
 - ❑ The congregation desires to accept into fellowship those living in adultery?
 - ❑ The congregation desires to not hear any preaching that exposes the sin of social drinking?
 - ❑ The congregation desires to meet on Thursday evening to partake of the Lord's Supper?
- ❑ What the congregation wants to do, or has wanted in the past, is not the standard



The results accomplished are not the standard of authority

- ❑ Romans 3:8
- ❑ Consider the example of Uzzah:
 - ❑ 2 Samuel 6:1-11
 - ❑ 1 Chronicles 15:12-13
- ❑ Many works churches have undertaken have been defended because of some result they accomplish (for example, missionary societies, “medical evangelism”, etc.)
- ❑ For a thing to be done by the authority of Christ (“in the name of”) it must be according to His law.
 - ❑ Matthew 7:21-23

- ❑ There are many sources or standards men turn to in religion to justify teachings, beliefs, and practices, but these cannot be our source or standard of authority:
 - ❑ Old Testament practices
 - ❑ The pope
 - ❑ Elders
 - ❑ Preachers
 - ❑ Creeds of men
 - ❑ Desires of the congregation
 - ❑ The results accomplished
 - ❑ And on and on...
- ❑ Religious teaching and practice must follow the divine source and standard.