

BIBLIOLOGY (6)

If God does not put His absolute word into writing, we have no absolute knowledge. We are left to the theories, discoveries and conclusions of other finite, sinful and even, at times, God mocking men and women. It is very logical to assume that God gave us His written word. If He didn't, we are in a miserable condition for we cannot know anything with absolute certainty.

QUESTION #6 - What are the **false** sources of authority that many use have as a basis for their belief system?

All people, regardless of who they are, act and react, believe and disbelieve based on some basis of authority. Every human being has an ultimate authority base to which he/she appeals when making decisions and choices in life. The Scriptures are clear that there is nothing wrong with having an authority base, as long as that authority base is in conformity to God and His word. But the Scriptures are equally clear in establishing the fact that if it comes down to a choice between doing wrong in God's sight or doing right in God's sight, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Most people have never taken the time to actually determine what their real authority base really is. As a result, most have been lulled into a spiritual stupor, actually being governed by some authority which is not an absolute authority and which is a false authority.

The purpose of this question and this section is to point out the various things that people use as their authority. Although the official titles of these false sources have existed for many years in the study of Systematic Theology, it is evident that they are just as contemporary and just as relevant as they were hundreds of years ago.

False Authority Source #1 - Rationalism

Rationalism is the belief system that makes one's own mind the ultimate authority. It tends to believe and accept **only** those things which can be personally and individually reasoned. In this source, one's own reasoning abilities become the ultimate source of authority and decisions and beliefs are determined by one's own mental rationale.

We would quickly and certainly acknowledge that the Bible places a very high priority on the development of the mind. However, to make one's own mind the ultimate authority is very deficient and very dangerous. At best, every human mind is finite, which means it is limited. If our ultimate authority basis must be a finite, limited human mind, we have **no** absolute authority. Also, every human mind is sinful, which means it is colored and lacking in many ways. If our authority basis is a sinful, depraved human mind, we have a defective authority.

The mind has a real need to "grow" in knowledge, which means it is not the source of knowledge. If one person's finite, sinful mind thinks one way and another person's finite, sinful mind thinks another way- to whom or to what do we appeal to determine absolute truth?

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If we are left to the theories and speculations of a person's mind as our ultimate authority, we have no real absolute authority. Truth is up for grabs- our minds versus others minds. Rationalism is very deficient and very dangerous. It is not a true and absolute authority.

False Authority Source #2 - Mysticism

Mysticism is the false belief system that makes one's feelings and experiences the absolute authority. The mystic is one who is always laying claim to the idea that they experienced something from God- "God did something"; "God healed something"; "God spoke to me"; "God led me"; "God revealed this to me"; "God directed me."

There is a sense in which true Biblical Christianity is experiential. For example, as the Word of God is heard, the Spirit of God does in fact move the minds and hearts of people in what could be called a "true mystical" way. However, this is not the same as making one's own feelings and experiences the basis for one's belief system and absolute authority.

There are many problems with those who use their emotions and feelings and experiences as a basis for what they believe:

(Problem #1)- Feelings most of the time lie. They do not express the truth. Feelings are very fickle, oft times governed by momentary situations and circumstances.

(Problem #2)- Experiences, especially in the religious arena, can be very deceiving. Satan is very skilled at imitating what is true- Mt. 7:21-23; II Cor. 11:13-15; I Tim. 4:1; I John 4:1. Just because one has experienced something does not automatically mean that experience is Biblical, right or from God.

(Problem #3)- Direct messages from God are clearly forbidden after the completion of the book of Revelation (Rev. 22:18-19). No matter how convincing or sincere the mystic may appear, there are no new messages God gives to mankind apart from those which are found in His written word.

If a person's authority base is another human beings own feelings or experiences, we are left with a very shallow and very limited foundation of authority. This kind of authority is really no authority.

False Authority Base #3 - Emotionalism

Closely connected with the previous point, this authority base relies on one's own feelings and emotions as the main source for what one believes and does. People who use this as a base of authority are fickle, emotional, irrational and unstable. They are theological "air-heads" who are very far removed from developing "sound minds."

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Those who have this as their authority base continually allude to and rely upon their feelings. Those who use this as their authority base often say such things as "I just feel it is right", or "I have a good feeling about this", "I'll know because I'll feel it."

There are obviously many problems with using your feelings as a basis of determining what is right and what to believe and the biggest problem is that **feelings often lie and do not express the truth**.

This teacher just learned of a woman who was on the internet and she got talking with a man and she abandoned her husband and her children and took off with this other man because she "felt" it was the right thing to do. Her husband is now left without a wife and he is raising daughters who are struggling because they cannot understand how their mother could just abandon them. The mother can abandon them because she governs her life by her feelings and not by sound, rational facts. Feelings, very seldom, will communicate what is true to you. If you make decisions based on your feelings, most of the time, you will make the wrong decisions.

False Authority Base #4 - Romanism

This is the false source that makes one's church or religion the absolute authority. In this type of authority base, the church is not the communicator of the truth, the church is the source of the truth.

In a system of Romanism, the real, God-ordained role of the Church is lost. Those who accept this as their authority base will cling to the church even when it can be clearly and Biblically established that what the church teaches or believes is false. In a base system of Romanism, if it comes down to a choice of accepting the pure teachings of the Bible as opposed to accepting the teachings of the church, the Bible is rejected and the teachings of the church or religion is accepted.

There are many people who fall into this category. Those caught up in Catholicism certainly do, as do Mormons, who practically worship the teachings of the church. However, this cannot just be limited to these obvious examples. There are people who believe the church over the Bible in all kinds of areas, and if shown the truth, will reject it and stick with the church. This teacher has seen this on matters pertaining to charismatic gifts, versions of the Bible, doctrinal matters such as God's sovereignty, election, the will of man and God's attributes. I have personally seen people reject truth and stick to what the church says. This is Romanism.

Certainly we do not minimize the importance of the N.T. Church. God does place a high priority on its existence, position, ministry and instruction. However, the Church is authoritative only as it lines itself up with God's word. It is **not** the church that is the authority, it is God's written word which is the authority and any church who attempts to usurp the authority of God's word is in fact a false Church.

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False Authority Base #5 - Instructorism

This is the false source authority base that makes one's Priest, Teacher, Instructor or Pastor the absolute authority. Those caught up in this type of authority source will blindly follow the instruction and the instructor even when it is not Biblical.

There is no doubt that a Pastor or Teacher can be used greatly by God to influence people. There is no doubt that God wants such men "highly esteemed" (I Thess. 5:12-13). The Apostle Paul expected that the churches of Galatia would be loyal to him and defend him and his teaching (Gal. 6:17). However, God's people must realize that the Instructor who is to be viewed this way is one who is giving careful attention to the study of and the rightly dividing of the written word (II Tim. 2:15). The Teacher **is not** the final authority; God's word is the final authority. Therefore, if the instruction does not line up with the "whole counsel of God" it is the Word that is to be followed and not the instructor. The authority for a true teacher is the Truth of the written word. Certainly when one is devoted to carefully handling of God's written word, that Teacher may be trusted and followed. However it is **always** the word that is the real authority and the Teacher has authority only so long as he lines up with the word.

We are warned as we near the end of the Church age that many false teachers and teachings will abound (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:1,6-7; I John 4:1-3). Instruction and Instructors are only authoritative to the extent that they are accurately expounding the Bible. It is **not** the Instructor who is the actual authority; it is the Bible that is the actual authority. Any Teacher, any Instructor, and any Pastor is still finite and sinful. The real authority that God honors is His word. When a gifted Pastor/Teacher is carefully and prayerfully studying God's word so that he may be precise in what is written, he will be authoritative.

The weight of accurately handling the Scriptures falls to the Teacher and that is exactly why James said, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." (James 3:1)

False Authority Base #6 - Commentatorism

This is the false source that makes a particular writing or commentary one's authority rather than the Bible. We certainly need to recognize the importance of reading and studying and learning from men who especially have written wonderful books that help us understand God's word. However, we must **always** realize that the value is found as the writing **accurately** communicates God's word. The value of a book or commentary, that is religious, lies in its ability to give a true understanding of a text and in its presentation of sound doctrine. Any book or commentary that goes beyond this objective is very dangerous and in fact is forbidden (i.e. Rev. 22:18-19). This Teacher considers it a privileged blessing of God to be able to pick up books and study from men such as Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, Lewis Sperry Chafer, H.A. Ironside or Dr. McGee. However we must always remember it is **not** their writings which are our final authority, it is God's writing that is our final authority.