

By What Authority?

THE EVOLUTION of humanity in the Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch of the Earth Period can be characterized by the gradual transference of ruling power from the religious to the secular sphere, followed by the democratization or individualization of this authority, so that, poised on the cusp of the third Christian millennium, Western peoples are endowed with an unprecedented quota of personal rights and responsibilities for the conduct of their lives.

While many pioneering egos are eagerly developing their divine potential by taking full responsibility for their lives, many more are clamoring for the trappings of personal liberty while still dutifully and even unconsciously consigning their minds and deeds to the suasion of the reigning authoritative voices issuing from the medical, scientific, academic, religious, and political establishments.

All authority is contingent; that is, it derives from and exists by virtue of the unqualified Authority that is God. So-called "primitive" humanity laved in direct consciousness of divinity, but they lacked *self*-consciousness and were therefore unfree because the impulse for their actions did not arise from their souls in full waking consciousness. To achieve this goal contact with the worlds of spirit was gradually dimmed and all but lost as human consciousness awoke to the world of the physical senses where the soul's energies are directed to gain knowledge and selfhood.

Having received the instrument of mind in the Atlantean Epoch, the human soul is called to use the cognitive faculty to establish its individual identity



Gustave Dorm (1833-1883)

Christ in the Synagogue

In response to the astonished skepticism of his listeners, who resented the wisdom and "mighty works" of this carpenter's son, Christ Jesus points to the source of His wisdom and authority.

(rightly construing the Cartesian motto, "I think, therefore I am") and with that identity to reenter the supersensible worlds. While Western egos continue to invoke, rely on, and be confused by spiritual and temporal authorities for the ordering of their time, resources, and very soul, the movement towards increasing individualism necessitates that man become entirely free from dogma and evolve his own religious life of thought. This is a fundamental condition for the development of the consciousness soul. Religious life must become more and more permeated by individual understanding, which also requires increased openness to other individuals' modes of belief. While the intellectual

soul was paramount during the Fourth Post-Atlantean Epoch, during which fixed belief systems were appropriate, in this era those systems are antithetical to the needs of the consciousness soul.

Today theocratic regimes (Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa, for instance) are atavisms, echoes of an era when priests, as channels of divine will, exercised autocratic control over all aspects of earthly life. Caesarism fused religious and secular authority in one leader, the god-man, with primary emphasis on worldly matters. Totalitarian regimes are purely secular, that is, atheistic, because the toleration of religious activities erodes the state's claim to absolute power.

The revolutionary movement initiated by Christ Jesus entails a radical transfer of authority from both priestcraft (Pharisees and Levites) and secular rulers (Caesar) to the God in the individual soul, as mediated by Christ Himself.

In common usage, the term *authority* designates a precept, power, or office, having its origin and duly constituted from either below (as in democracies, which elect their leaders and through them establish laws), or from above (as in the Ten Commandments and New Testament Gospels, or powers delegated by superior to subordinate ranks in civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies, as in the centurion "set under authority," who had soldiers under him).

The term *authoritarianism* signifies an abuse or unauthorized exercise of power which compels others to submit to rules and requirements against their will. The cosmic I AM that spoke to Moses and lived in the earthly vehicles of the man Jesus for three years is not only, as Logos, author of our being (John 1), He is also "author of our salvation" (Heb. 2:10) as beings gone astray. Where else does authority rest if not with our Maker and our Savior, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2)? He is also the source of the individual authority that speaks in our souls as intuition issuing from the World of Life Spirit, and as the Holy Spirit that teaches us all things and brings all things, all past evolution, to our remembrance (John 14:26).

As far as the Pharisees were concerned, scripture was sacrosanct and literal, the authority of its law was incontestable. That made Christ Jesus a law breaker: He did not rest on Sundays, He healed,

and plucked ripe corn from the fields, and ate at the tables of publicans, and associated with sinners. Worse, He was a blasphemer, for He said "I and the Father are One." Understandably he was asked what gave Him the right to act and speak as he did, by what or by whose authority (Matt. 21:23-27). If it was not through the recognized channel of Mosaic and Levitical law, then it was unauthorized, illegitimate. That He spoke as one having authority, not as the doctors of law (scribes), was alarmingly clear to those whose influential positions He seemed to challenge. It was troubling enough that He moved men with words of power, but "with authority commanded he even unclean spirits, and they obeyed him" (Mark 1:27).

Curiously, Christ Jesus did not exploit the power he clearly possessed, which was a cause for concern even amongst his closest disciples, who wanted the Messiah to *act* like the anointed of God, not just to proclaim it. But Christ Jesus had no problem giving Caesar what belonged to Caesar, for the Kingdom of Christ the King was (is) not of Caesar's world, nor does it compel obedience or restrict personal freedom. Caesar's too was Christ's physical body, for that also was of the earth. Therefore, through Caesar's representative, Pilate, Christ Jesus did not contest his exterior person but offered it up, because "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 19:36).

Here is a wonder indeed, a complete inversion of the authority concept. For *this* king washes feet. The throne of this king is found in the hearts of those who truly hear him. The power of this king is in disavowing His power, giving all to the glory of the Father. Not I but "the Father within me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10). The power of this king is not used to do diabolical deeds with impunity but to punish devils by His holy presence and cast them out with His imperative word. This king came "not to be ministered unto but to minister" (Mark 10:45).

He Who spoke as one having authority is the Shepherd of our souls Whose voice the heart knows as a child instantly recognizes the voice of its mother. If we like sheep have gone astray, we need but attune our inner ears to hear the voice of truth that will lead us into the heavenly fold of spiritual understanding and perfect peace.

Possessing no less than cosmic powers, but

refusing to employ them, Christ Jesus frustrated the expectations of His friends and confounded his enemies. Upon identifying himself in Gethsemane as the one they were seeking with the words, “I am he” (John 18:6), they fell backwards as if struck by lightning—scarcely surprising when we realize that the incarnate Solar Logos is identifying Himself. Earlier, before his outraged listeners, Christ proclaimed that “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). In this imperial declaration we discover the source of the authentic authority that Christ bestows upon humanity as its archetypal Ego. The ego is the focus of the human spirit’s consciousness. The Christing of the ego has its pale reflection in the coronation of a king. But with this difference:



Watercolor, J. James Tissot (1836-1902), Brooklyn Museum

One of the few recorded times in which He identifies himself with power, narrated only in John’s Gospel, Christ Jesus asks the band dispatched to arrest Him, “Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he... [whereupon] they went backward and fell to the ground” (18:46). The artist dramatizes the explosive effect on His hearers as spiritual shock waves issue from His Word.

Whereas a rightfully acceding king is authorized to rule others, the Christed ego is ruler of the kingdom of his human nature, the populace of capricious desires and passions that batten on egoistic behavior. So crowned, albeit with thorns, Christ Jesus could say, “be of good cheer; I have [the I AM has] overcome the world” (John 16:33)—the world and all the Luciferic, Ahrimanic, and Asuric spirits that contend therein for control of the human soul. Temporal rulers may have authority over one’s outward life, but, unlike Christ and his spiritual antagonists, they have no power to affect the soul.

The Christed Self is distinguished not by its power to control the lives of others, but by its ability to awaken others to their unclaimed spiritual patrimony. It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This promise apparently does not suffice the ambitions of those who confuse earthly with heavenly things. James and John wanted to know (before the trial of the Passion had transpired!) who among all the disciples was to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God, who would sit

closest to the throne of their Master, the Footwasher, the Crucified. Christ’s answer was that “whosoever will be great among you shall be your servant” (Mark 10:44). Some of the apostles didn’t “get it.” Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? asks their master. The Sons of Thunder think they are. They do drink from the cup of tribulation, and the draught was bitter indeed. They realize that the desire for heavenly preferment is not compatible with spiritual advancement, whose bedrock is humility.

We see the complete turnaround of the temporal understanding of authority as the power to overtly affect the lives of others. The One most capable of so doing ever had to resist the impulse surging from His prodigious love to use his magnified powers, his legitimate authority as the Son of God, to aid His younger brothers. To have done so would have kept them subject to their errors and dependencies, still looking for miracles and magicians rather than calling forth the Healer and High One in their own souls.

The student of Western Wisdom Teachings should expect to encounter ridicule and even hostility

from those skeptics who question and fear the individualizing of authority in the “inner tribunal,” as described by Max Heindel. For the more traditionally minded, this orientation will result in radical subjectivity, raw egoism, and anarchy. Their fear arises from a refusal to truly believe in the words and deeds of Christ Jesus and reflects the need to stay tied to outer authorities. Such skeptics, champions of orthodoxy, require additional disillusionment that must come from placing their hopes and lives in the hands of those who know better—at least that is their claim. So shall misplaced trust make gospel of conventional medical judgments and engage life with pharmacological strategies that promise, if not a chemical heaven, at least anodynes for enduring hell on earth.

All pronouncements and actions based on purely human knowledge are predictably fallible, while at the same time modern media serve to magnify their authoritative impact. Here is a potent combination: The pride of ignorant certainty and the oracular voice of the print and electronic media which are ever citing the “proper authorities”: the scientific experts, one close to the president, an insider, top brass in the Pentagon, a senior fellow in an elite think tank, a Nobel prize winner. How can we not believe these authorities? Easily. Even simple weather predictions are as often off the mark as on. Why? Weather is a function of the invisible etheric world, while only quantification of visible elements is available to the forecaster, elements whose behavior is the *effect* of unseen, because nonmaterial, causes.

And so it is with all phenomena whose form and function are *consequences* of immaterial, and therefore unacknowledged, causes. Lacking knowledge of the causative worlds of spirit, truth regarding physical phenomenon can, at best, be partial; at worst, dangerously wrong.

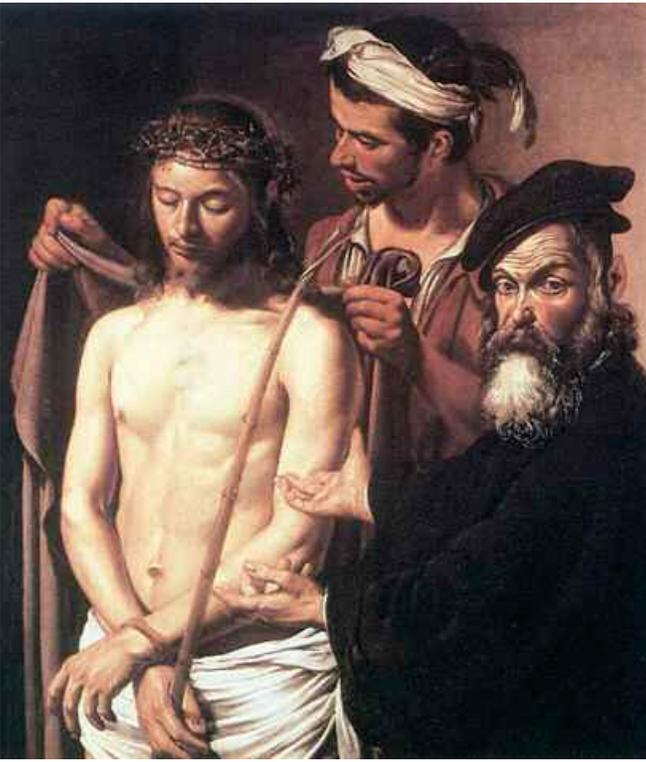
In time each shall prove first hand that no authoritative text, including the Bible, and no authoritative voice, be it the Pope's, is as unerring as the direct recourse to the memory of nature in the worlds of concrete thought and life spirit to obtain knowledge on any matter. In these metaphysical realms lies all the wisdom of the world, access to which is gained by the development of supersensi-

ble faculties slumbering in every human soul.

Max Heindel clears the air of any authoritative pretense on his part: “You will never find truth by studying my own or any other books” (*Letters to Students*, p. 98). We may assimilate ideas from various sources, but they are worthless to us until we take them into our inner being and “work them over carefully and prayerfully” so that they come alive as “nearer the truth than anything we can get from anyone else or in any other way” (*LS*, p. 204-205). Only insofar as ideas and precepts, wherever encountered, are made part of one's inner self through the unrelenting practice of heart-based meditation and strong-willed concentration, will we gain the certitude of living truth.

If the “inner tribunal” of each individual is the forum where truth is adjudicated and confirmed, then it becomes clear that no attempt at persuasion will be made by the author of the *Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, who writes in its preface, “What is said in this work is to be accepted or rejected by the reader according to his discretion” (p. 9). It “is not dogmatic, neither does it appeal to any other authority than the reason of the student” (p.7). Thus the “emphatic insistence [by its founder] on absolute personal freedom in the Rosicrucian Fellowship” (*LS*, p.51). The honoring of individual freedom conditions the thoughts and deeds of the Elder Brothers of the Rosicrucian Order and has been characterized by another eminent occultist in these words: “The less belief there is in any personal authority, the greater is the understanding of Christian Rosenkreutz.”

The essence of the matter is that truth is its own authority. It will commend itself to the truth seeker by virtue of what it is. To influence another in any way other than by gentle suggestion and general support is to intrude on the sanctity of their free will. In applying this principle in the affairs of The Rosicrucian Fellowship, Max Heindel enunciates the following guidelines: (1) The Fellowship should work “for a common purpose, without leadership” (*LS*, p. 53). (2) The Fellowship would better be described as an *association* rather than an *organization*, “for there is a vast difference between an association that is entirely voluntary and an organization which binds its members by



Oil on canvas (1605-6), attributed to Caravaggio (1571-1610), Palazzo Rosso, Genoa, Italy

Ecce Homo

Little did Pilate realize the archetypal weight of his words in presenting Christ Jesus to the angry crowd (Behold, the man!), for if Christ (I AM) is the way, the noncombative acceptance of maximum world insult is part of that way. But only because the Christed Ego's Kingdom is not of this world. Moreover, no worldly authority has "power at all against me except it were given thee from above." —John 18:36, 19:11

oaths, pledges, etc.” (3) “[I]n the measure that the free will of members is interfered with, the object of the Rosicrucian Order, to foster individuality and self-reliance, is defeated. Laws and by-laws are limitations, and for that reason there should be as few as possible. The Teacher even thought that it would be possible to get along without any at all” (*Teachings of an Initiate*, p. 150).

A most sobering and cautionary statement was made by Max Heindel in connection with violations of the principles of human freedom and autonomy: that “the day must come when the Rosicrucian Fellowship will go the way of all other movements; it will bind itself by laws and usurpation of power will cause it to crystallize and disintegrate” (*T.I.*, p. 152).

The knowledge of what constitutes the proper use of authority as exemplified by Christ Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, is diametrically

opposed to the way of the world that tends toward a proliferation of laws and restrictions that have a chilling effect on the free-flowing, grace-giving action of the Holy Spirit. How was it that Paul in his own defense before Festus almost converted the governor by his impassioned sanity? The Holy Spirit was invested in him, bringing to life the truth of Christ. True authority, always imaging its source, is trinitarian: The Father manifests in the dignity and regality of human physical bearing, in the upright spine of incarnate will, in the noble reserve that bespeaks holy purpose; the Son manifests in the love that bears all, gives all, forgives all, and maintains equipoise amidst the most trying circumstances; the Holy Spirit shines through a purified desire nature and discloses the concepts that ring with truth and certitude.

It is a primary aim of the science of spirit to promote individual freedom by developing in humans a real connection with the spiritual worlds and by strengthening in them a living relationship with the central reality of Earth evolution—the Christ Impulse; for this Impulse is the source of the still Voice, the loving Presence, and the holy Ideal which is the authority for all our thoughts, words, and deeds.

The One most able to overcome and overwhelm his adversaries, chose rather to suffer, forbear, and forgive them, giving them unto the end the freedom to amend their behavior. How petty and self-serving are many of our actions in light of this radiant sacrifice, this heroic generosity, this refusal to respond in kind. Christlike authority is a concomitant of soul growth. It is the ultimate fruit of self-abnegation and humility. One who has attained to great spiritual heights remarks, “The heights of the spirit can only be climbed by passing through the portal of humility.”

The test and rule of real Christian authority is that the more completely one is in possession of the Christ power, the more perfectly will one utterly forego using it to satisfy *any* personal need or desire, be it to quench one’s thirst or to save one’s life. The Author of our being has written in His blood the will and testament for our redemption. He alone is the authority for what we can do and the power by which we will do it. □

—C.W.