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Authority and Authorities in the Church of England.

THE Church of England is a form of organized Christianity. Hence, in discussing authority and authorities within it, two avenues of thought are opened up according as we think of it chiefly as organized or as Christian. If we dwell on its organization, we are on the human and legal plane, and our pathway invites us to enter upon the thorny subjects of the origin of the ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, or of the relations of Church and State, and consequently of Canon Law and Statute Law, or of the sometimes conflicting claims of Incumbents, Bishops and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. If, however, we dwell on the fact that the Church of England is Christian, our thoughts are moving in a higher and heavenly sphere. We are concerned rather with faith than with discipline. We remember that Christianity belongs to the genus religion, and we have to ask ourselves what we mean by religion. We ask further what we mean fundamentally by authority, and how authority stands in relation to conceptions of individual liberty. Then we have to inquire what is the ultimate Christian authority in matters of faith, and how we recognize it, and, further, whether there are any subordinate and partial authorities, and, if so, what are their nature and limitations. In the present essay an attempt is made to deal mainly with the latter group of questions, and roughly in the order which has been just indicated.

What is religion?

Sometimes an attempt has been made to find an answer by resorting to etymology. Cicero adopted this method. There is a passage in his book on the "Nature of the Gods," in which he derives religion from a verb meaning to "travel over," whether literally by physical movement or metaphorically in reading, speech, or thought. From this point of view a religious man is one who is constantly dwelling on the Divine. (Cic. N.D. 2. 28, 72, qui omnia, quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent, sunt dicti religiosi ex relegendo, ut elegantes ex eligendo.) Other ancient authorities, however, followed by

most modern ones,[1] seek a derivation from a word meaning to bind, and trace a connexion between religion and obligation. This view is supported by a phrase of the sceptical Lucretius, who spoke of delivering the mind from the knots of religion (*religionum nodis animos exsolvere*). We need not stay to decide between the two views. (In this particular case, as we shall see, the second derivation yields an idea which lies very near to the truth, but etymology is often quite an unreliable guide to the meaning of a word.) The etymological method of obtaining a definition was the only one open to Cicero and other ancient students, but it is not really satisfactory.

Thanks to our greater knowledge of the world and its races, we are able to call to our assistance the results of the modern comparative study of religion. Yet even here we need not enter into the merits of the rival theories of the origin of religion. Truth may be on the side of Dr. Frazer, who propounds in his " Golden Bough " his animistic theory that primitive man, failing in his own efforts to influence nature by magic, was constrained to believe in the existence of stronger Beings who " made the stormy wind to blow, the lightning to flash, and the thunder to roll." [2] Or it may be on the side of Herbert Spencer, Grant Allen, and other members of the Humanist or Euhemerist school, who think that all religion rose from the worship of dead men—a theory sometimes more popularly called the " ghost " theory. Or it may be on the side of some who still find ground for believing in a very primitive revelation of God suitable to the undeveloped state of primitive man. These are all theories which, at this distance of time from the point in the development of the race when Religion took its beginning, must at best be very speculative. Happily for our purpose, what we want is some idea of what religion is after it has come into being. We want to discover what are the elements, if any, which are common to all religions. It will be a help to this to transcribe and to compare certain definitions by well-known authorities.

Frazer [3] understands by religion " a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life," and again he says :

[1] Cf. Liddon, " Some Elements of Religion " (ed. 1904), pp. 18, 19.
[2] " Golden Bough," 2nd ed., i. 77. [3] " Golden Bough," i. 63 ff.

"Religion everywhere assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion." Andrew Lang[1] gives as the "two chief sources of religion: (1) the belief, how attained we know not, in a powerful, moral, eternal, omniscient Father and Judge of men; (2) the belief . . . in somewhat of man which may survive the grave," and he adds that by the second belief man "becomes the child of the God in whom, perhaps, he already trusted." Jevons[2] says: "In every cult there are two tendencies or impulses, the mystic and the practical, the need of the blessings which the supernatural power can bestow and the desire for communion with the author of those blessings." These three writers are anthropologists. The next two are philosophers. Pfleiderer[3] writes: "The essence of religion is that reference of a man's life to a world-governing power, which seeks to grow into a living union with it." Edward Caird[4] says: "We may begin by asserting that religion involves a relation, and indeed a conscious relation, to a being or beings whom we designate as divine." Turning finally to a psychologist, we find that William James[5] quotes with approval a definition given by Auguste Sabatier, and adds to it a very similar one of his own. "The religious phenomenon, studied as an inner fact, and apart from ecclesiastical or theological complications, has shown itself to consist everywhere, and at all its stages, in the consciousness which individuals have of an intercourse between themselves and higher powers with which they feel themselves to be related. This intercourse is realized at the time as being both active and mutual."

If these definitions be examined, it will be seen that each of them contains two elements which are common property. The first is a consciousness in man of the existence of a something distinct from man himself. The second is a desire, however rudimentary and instinctive, to be at one with this something. If we express these elements in the language of the higher forms of religion, we may say that religion always involves a belief in the existence of God (it is not intended here to imply any particular definition of the nature of God) and a desire for communion with Him. There

[1] "Making of Religion," 301–2.
[2] "Introduction to the History of Religion," 249.
[3] "Religions Philosophie," p. 327, 3rd edition.
[4] "Evolution of Religion," i. 53.
[5] "Varieties of Religious Experience," 464–5.

can be no objection to our expressing the definition in these higher terms, on the ground that in savage religions neither the sense of the existence of God nor the desire to approach Him is always very clear, for as Edward Caird [1] remarks : " It would be as absurd to say that the idea of religion is to be confined to that which religion shows itself to be among savages as to say that the idea of language is to be confined to that which is revealed in the speech of an infant. The principle of development makes such imperfect forms intelligible, for it teaches us to expect that in the first steps of the evolution of any form of consciousness its expression will be indistinct and uncertain, and will least of all show what it really is."

There is, perhaps, one objection to the definition now given which must be noticed, viz. that it does not cover Buddhism and Comtism, for in neither of these is there a recognition of a God. An examination of this objection, however, merely provides an excellent illustration of the soundness of our definition, for the history of Buddhism and Comtism alike shows how deeply the religious instinct is fixed in human nature. Buddhism may have started without a God. If it did, it had then to be classed as a philosophy, not as a religion. But Buddhism very soon took to itself gods and became a religion. Of the more orthodox Southern Buddhists of modern days in Ceylon it has been said : " They [2] imitate Christian phraseology ; for example, they speak of ' our Lord and Saviour Buddha.' They observe Buddha's birthday." But the really flourishing followers of Buddha, to wit, the Northern Buddhists of China, Japan and other countries, have all along had a theistic bias, and have given divine honours and worship to supposed manifestations of the Buddhahood.[3] For example, in Japan there is the celebrated cult of Amida the Creator, the merciful Father. The Comtist " Religion of Humanity " is not fairly adduced as an objection, for it is a purely manufactured article. Nevertheless, even Comtism [4] had to find space for the religious instinct, and men were bidden to adore collective humanity as the " Grand Être," along with space as the " Grand Milieu," and the earth as the " Grand Fétiche."

[1] " Evolution of Religion," i. 54.
[2] " Edinburgh Missionary Conference Report," i. 164.
[3] Cf. G. H. Moule, " The Spirit of Japan," 75 ff.
[4] On Comtism, cf. Orr, " The Christian View of God and the World," p. 385, with the references there given.

We may then confidently say that religion includes a consciousness of God and a desire for communion with Him. An important consequence follows from this. It will be the object of every true man to know the nature and character of God, and to order his life so that he may best realize and enjoy communion with Him.

What is authority?

It is very difficult to know where to begin a discussion of this subject, but it may help us if we first take two examples of authority and examine them. We can then make an attempt to state in general terms the meaning of authority, and the position of the individual in relation thereto.

A. The two examples shall be from the spheres of law and of the sciences.

1. Take first the case of *civil authority*. Authority in a State is commonly divided into three kinds: executive, judicial, and legislative. Executive authority is that which is most commonly in evidence. It is this, for instance, with which evil doers come into contact. But it merely exists to carry out instructions, and both its own existence, its instructions and the power to execute them are derived from a higher source. Judicial authority is similarly derived. A judge receives power from a higher authority to interpret its laws in their application to particular doubtful cases. The highest type of civil authority is the legislative, and the question of supreme interest in any State has reference to the seat of legislative authority. In a modern democracy there can hardly be much doubt about the answer to this question. It is loudly proclaimed by all political parties that ultimate power lies with the people, and the selected body of law-makers in every modern democracy constantly has the people in its thoughts, and seeks the popular approval for what it does. It is, however, of interest to inquire what answer was given to this question by the jurists of ancient Rome, partly because the Roman empire appears at first sight to have been based upon a different conception, and partly because we are accustomed to think of the Romans as the great tutors of the world—at least of the West—in legal matters.

In the Digest of Justinian there is a striking quotation from Julianus, a jurist of the period of Hadrian and the Antonines, on the authority of the people in making and unmaking laws by force

of custom: "Inveterate[1] custom is not undeservedly regarded as law, and that is Right which is said to have been established by custom. For since the laws themselves bind us for no other reason than that they have been received by judgment of the people, deservedly also will those things, which the people have approved without any writing, bind every one: for what does it matter whether a people declares its will by vote or by affairs and actions? Wherefore this view also has been quite rightly held, that laws are repealed not only by vote of the legislator, but also through neglect by tacit consent of all." A little farther in the Digest is a very familiar citation from a later jurist Ulpian:[2] "What has pleased the prince has the force of law, because along with the royal law which was passed about his ruling, the people conferred upon him all their power and authority." And in the sixth century Justinian[3] himself remarks: "For with the ancient so-called royal law, all the right and all the power of the people of Rome was transferred to the imperial power." These quotations express the universal opinion of the Roman lawyers from the second to the sixth century that the ultimate source of political authority was the people. Exactly the same view[4] was taken by the jurists of the eleventh and following centuries, headed by Irnerius, the founder of the great law school at Bologna in the eleventh century. These also discussed a subsidiary question, whether the people had parted with their legislative authority finally, or whether they still held it in reserve and could re-assume it at will. Opinion was divided, but at least some great names can be adduced in support of the view that it was always held in reserve; and we may note that this is the only logical result of a belief in the enduring power of custom to establish law. At the risk of multiplying quotations we will refer to Irnerius's statement that the "universitas,[5] that is, the people, has this duty, namely, to take thought for individuals as for its members," and to a remark of Bulgarus, an eleventh-century commentator on Justinian's Digest, that the power of making laws is reserved to "the universitas, or to him who stands in the place of the universitas or people, namely the magistrate."

At the same time it is recognized that the people cannot be

[1] Quoted in Carlyle, "Mediæval Political Theory in the West," i. 65.
[2] Carlyle, *op. cit.*, 64. [3] *Op. cit.*, 69. [4] *Op. cit.*, ii. 66–7.
[5] *Op. cit.*, ii. 57.

entirely arbitrary in the things they do, whether directly or by delegate. There is a passage in a Prague fragment [1] of about the tenth century which well expresses the connexion which was generally felt to exist between law and the principle of justice : "Law has its beginnings in justice, and flows from it as a stream flows from its source. But justice is a will which assigns to each man his due. This indeed is full and perfect in God, but it is called justice with us because it partakes of the Divine justice." There is in this quotation another point besides the connexion of law and justice. It is the reference to an ideal standard in God. Perhaps this is really the thought which lies behind a certain number of passages [2] in Justinian's Digest which ascribe the origin of law to God. The thought is of course perfectly familiar to us from St. Paul,[3] but it is interesting that St. Paul's view is supported by the opinion of the Roman lawyers, though they did not express themselves so clearly.

We may now sum up the views of these Roman lawyers upon ultimate political theory in some such propositions as these: Normally authority in a state is exercised by a body of legislative experts, and the ordinary citizen, immersed in his pleasure and his business, is quite content to leave the matter to them. But he reserves to himself the right to criticize what they do, and he is only content to leave legislation to them so long as their laws meet with the general approval. Failing this, he is quite at liberty, in concert with his fellow citizens, to withdraw the authority which he has delegated to them. Further, in his criticism of laws, he has in his mind a standard of reference in the abstract conception of justice, and this stands in some relation to the Divine character.

2. For our second illustration of an authority let us go to *the sciences*. No statement is more commonly heard than that some person is an authority upon this or that department of science. By this we understand that he has studied deeply the literature of the subject, and consequently is assumed to have a better acquaintance with it than the average man. Therefore the average man very wisely is content to ask his opinion when he wants any information, and usually accepts the opinion without further question and acts accordingly. So far the case is exactly parallel to that

[1] *Op. cit.*, ii. 13. [2] *Op. cit.*, i. 69.
[3] Rom. xiii. 1; cf. Wisdom of Solomon vi. 3.

of the average citizen who cheerfully acquiesces in the laws laid down by the Government. But as in the case of the citizen the matter may not always end in acquiescence, so it is here. There is a right of criticism. If an average man found time to rise above the average and to specialize in some department of science, he would look to the expert to present him with facts and arguments which would convince him of the correctness of the opinions which hitherto he had been content to accept upon trust. It is always advisable to have such critics of experts. If the experts survive the test, their reputation is justly enhanced, and men are the more prepared to trust them. But if they are convicted of error or misrepresentation, they are regarded as authorities no longer. The average man must seek a guide elsewhere. It follows that an authority in science is an authority only for those whom he does or can at will convince of the truth of what he says. And the ordinary man has in himself a standard by which he examines the views which are presented to him, the standard of his reasoning powers together with whatever body of knowledge he may already possess.

B. Two conclusions clearly emerge from our study of these illustrations. The first is that there is such a thing as authority; and the second is that authority has to convince those for whom it is authority. Neither point can be omitted without serious error. We will define authority in the words of Mr. Edward Grubb [1] as "control of the individual, of his thoughts and his activities, by a knowledge larger than his own." And no better statement of the necessity that authority shall convince can be found than that of Martineau.[2] He is speaking of authority in religion, but his words are of general application: "If to rest on authority is to mean an acceptance of what, as foreign to my faculty, I cannot know, in mere reliance on the testimony of one who can and does, I certainly find no such basis for religion: inasmuch as second-hand belief, assented to at the dictation of an initiated expert, without personal response of thought and reverence in myself, has no more tincture of religion in it than any other lesson learned by rote. The mere resort to testimony for information beyond our province does not fill the meaning of 'authority,' which we never acknowledge till

[1] "Authority and the Light Within," p. 11.
[2] "Seat of Authority in Religion," pp. vi., vii.

that which speaks to us from another and a higher strikes home and wakes the echoes in ourselves, and is thereby instantly transferred from external attestation to self-evidence."

This passage, while it admirably illustrates the important principle in support of which it was quoted, must at the same time be read in the light of two further considerations, which go some way towards modifying its tone.

1. The first is that Martineau is speaking of an ideal state of things, without any such qualification as is demanded by the facts of normal experience. We all begin by a stage of bondage to authority. This is emphatically true in religion. The child receives its earliest teaching about God and His self-revelation to men from the lips of its mother, and receives it for no other conscious reason than that "mother says so," an instinctive tendency to depend upon others being confirmed by a half-conscious deduction from mother's love to mother's truthfulness. But the remark applies also in every department of knowledge. The student begins by accepting the results of the research of his predecessors, and when he has digested their conclusions and learned, as it were, the geography of his subject, he is in a position to advance beyond his predecessors and even to correct their results in the light of fuller knowledge.

Following upon this stage of bondage to authority comes what may be called a stage of abstract freedom—a stage in which we assert the right to criticize. This stage is most commonly passed through when the child is growing into the man. At this period of life there is universally seen a tendency to throw off all the authorities of childhood: in the moral sphere sometimes unfortunately to let dawning freedom degenerate into licence, and in the intellectual sphere to seek to know the reason of everything. It is a critical stage, but it is a necessary one. It should be finally followed by a period in which we voluntarily assent on grounds of reason or experience to what we formerly accepted on authority. Now at length, as Martineau says, authority strikes home, and external attestation becomes self-evidence. Every one will agree with him that this is the only ideally satisfactory state to be in on any subject whatever. Most men, however, will and must continue to be in bondage, more or less absolute, to authority on every subject except the very few of which they can claim to be masters. Nevertheless,

every one ought to be pressing on, as far as in him lies, to the stage of voluntary assent. This alone can endure. The whole problem in the religious education of the young is to secure that the third stage shall follow immediately upon, or better still even precede, the ending of the first.

2. The second consideration arising from Martineau's statement has reference to the recognition of authority. If authority, to borrow his phrase, is to "strike home," there must be some plectrum upon which it can strike to cause "the echoes." Or, to change the metaphor, there must be a court of appeal within the man, a logical prius. Now there are important differences in the way in which appeal to this prius is made and answered, according to the subject under consideration. The simplest case is the intellectual one. That early professor of mathematics called Euclid is our primary authority for the statement of his famous fifth proposition that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal to one another. His authority is accepted because his arguments appeal to reason, and are thereby recognized to be sound. The logical prius is the reason possessed by every man. The case is simple, because every man of ordinary ability can feel the force of the arguments. Just in so far, however, as certain very dense schoolboys or certain (surely imaginary) brilliant classical scholars are apparently incapable of appreciating Euclid's reasoning, so far does this intellectual case become more nearly like the artistic case which must next be considered. It is a familiar fact that people do not always appreciate a great painting, or a great poem, when first it is brought to their notice. Indeed, it is doubtful whether ordinary people ever really appreciate great paintings. An hour or two spent in watching the crowd in a municipal picture gallery will provide evidence enough in this direction. Only a trained artist really appreciates a great painting. And there is more to be said than this. A new painter, inaugurating a new style, frequently fails to be appreciated at first, but after an interval his works begin to receive more serious attention, and gradually he is accorded his due place. What has happened? We say that he has created a taste for his works. He has himself created in men the power by which he is appreciated, by which he is recognized as an authority. It must be noticed that we have used the word "power" rather than the word "prius." The "prius" to

which an artist makes appeal is the artistic faculty, and this is part of human nature and cannot be created. But it is not always active, any more than in the dense schoolboy the intellectual faculty is active. It is rather a possibility or potentiality in our nature, which needs to be evoked into active existence. The artist presents his painting to the dormant artistic faculty, and thereby calls it into active life. He then receives from it a recognition of his authority.

This distinction between the prius and the power, between the faculty passive and active, becomes of the utmost importance in the sphere of religion. Every one has the religious faculty. It is part of human nature. But it is not active in all men. In some it appears (though the appearance is deceptive) to be crushed beyond the possibility of revival. Again, there is a precise parallel in religion to the creation by a new artist of a taste for his work. St. Paul remarked that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and meant thereby that certain of his readers were incapable of understanding the excellence of his teaching. To anticipate for a moment what will be stated later, the teaching of Christ does not always take its place immediately as authoritative in a man's mind and heart. The Spirit of Christ has to create an appreciation of Christ. It is as the Spirit does His creating, or, if the expression be preferred, His revivifying work, that Christ is appreciated, is recognized and accepted as authoritative in matters of religion. Then, as Martineau said, external attestation becomes self-evidence. The religious authority comes to be within the soul.

C. Before we finally leave the subject of authority in general, it will be perhaps advisable just to allude to its relation to the rights and independence of the individual. The question may be raised whether the whole conception of authority is not opposed to liberty of thought, that cherished modern possession, and to the right of private judgment, that dearly won prize of the Renaissance and the Reformation. In attempting to deal with this question, it will be convenient to draw a line between two loosely defined classes who, for the moment, and in relation to any particular subject, may be described as the educated and the uneducated layman.

1. When a man who is uneducated in any subject ventures to press his private opinion against the utterances of real author-

ities in that subject, the consequences are usually disastrous. The modern craze for freedom has its Nemesis. It is fatal to the development of real and cultured personality for which the discipline of authority is necessary. As Forsyth [1] has said: "An individualistic age is one in which at last men tend to be as like as blackberries, and as cheap." It is good to find this fact amply recognized by one who is so destructive of historic authorities as Auguste Sabatier: "Authority [2] is a necessary function of the species, and for very self-preservation it watches over that offspring in whom its life is prolonged. To undertake to suppress it is to misapprehend the physiological and historic conditions of life, whether individual or collective. Itself both pedagogic method and social bond, it may be transformed, it cannot disappear. Pure anarchists are unconscious dreamers." Nevertheless, while this is true, there is also truth in another remark of Sabatier in that excellent discussion of the relations of authority and autonomy from which we have already quoted: "Like every good teacher, authority should labour to render itself useless." The aim of all law is the abolition of law. Control by an external power is a tutor to instruct us in the principles and practice of self-control. It should do this, as we have already hinted, by developing a true personality. "We are [3] in this world to acquire for ourselves and promote in others a moral personality, in which freedom is an element, but only one. And the effect of a real authority upon personality is the most kindling and educative influence it can know. In the interior of the soul authority and freedom go hand in hand." It is only a good authority who can make us really free from the slavery of individualism—a slavery none the less destructive because it is largely unconscious. Acute thinkers have pointed to its existence. Bacon spoke of the "idols" of the market place and the theatre. Deliverance from these and admission to true freedom can only come by way of submission to authority.

2. There remains the case which we have called that of the educated layman. And here it must be remembered that liberty of thought is an inalienable privilege of every man, and it is none the less such because it can easily degenerate into licence. By

[1] "The Principle of Authority," 324.
[2] "The Religions of Authority," p. xxx.
[3] Forsyth, *op. cit.*, 322.

an educated layman we mean one who has sat at the feet of those who profess to be authorities in his subject, and has allowed their actions or statements to make appeal to the proper faculty within him. Now what is to happen if that faculty does not make its approving response, and he finds himself in disagreement with the authorities? Such a man has, in truth, become an authority himself in virtue of his prolonged study of his subject. He puts out his views for general consideration. He may convince others. In that case his opinion holds the field, and others abandon the contrary opinions which they have previously held. But he may not convince others. We then have the case, so common in everyday life, when "doctors differ." The case is ultimate. Liberty to differ has to be allowed, and ordinary men choose between the rival authorities as best they can—usually by the light of quite alien considerations.

Meantime progress in human knowledge is not uncommonly made by the successive revolts of educated private judgment against authority.

(*To be continued.*)

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