

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

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Authority in religion by J. H. Leckie

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J. H. LECKIE

**AUTHORITY
IN RELIGION**

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BY

REV. J. H. LECKIE

CUPAR-FIFE

CURRE hic vel ibi: non inuenies quietem, nisi
in humili subiectione sub praelati regimine.—
THOMAS À KEMPIS.

VOS vocatis me magistrum ac dominum: et
bene dicitis; sum etenim.—ST. JOHN xiii. 13

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is not so much dogmatic as suggestive. It does, however, endeavour to present a systematic treatment of its theme. Its argument is mediating and conservative. It attempts to show that the theory which traces Authority in Religion to the direct, universal communion of God with man involves recognition of the great 'objective' forms in which Authority presents itself as a fact of history and of experience.

Many great books have been written on Authority, in English, German, and (especially perhaps) in French. But there may be room for a short treatise, introductory to the subject and seeking to combine brevity with some degree of comprehensiveness and system.

It may be objected to the plan of this book that it does not contemplate any separate treatment of the Authority of the Bible. But, from the point of view represented here, the problem of the Scriptures

does not seem to involve any special difficulties. The enduring claim of our Sacred Writings to be held in peculiar reverence is that they are the Record of Revelation and the classical Literature of Faith. Their sanction is the divine Voices whose message they contain.

I have to thank the Editor of the *London Quarterly Review* for permission to use an article of mine which appeared in that Journal. It forms the substance of Chapter V. on "The Theoretic Source and Organ of Authority."

My cordial thanks for encouragement and help are due to the Rev. D. W. Forrest, D.D., and the Rev. Prof. Cairns, D.D. Principal Iverach showed me great kindness in allowing me the privilege of seeing the proofs of his article on "Authority" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

I am indebted to the Rev. James P. Gibson for very careful reading of my MS.

J. H. L.

CUPAR, *August* 1909.

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OUTLINE OF ARGUMENT

- CHAPTER I. Defines Authority, and asserts its reality, and its abiding necessity, in Life and Religion.
- CHAPTER II. States, on the other hand, the case for Freedom and Individualism as essential elements in Thought and Faith.
- CHAPTER III. States the Problem of Authority. In the first place, the difficulty of reconciling the opposing claims of Authority and Freedom is considered. Secondly, the argument, passing from the question of Authority as opposed to Freedom, proceeds to consider the perplexities presented by the nature of Authority in itself, as illustrated in the religious history of the past, as well as in the present position of theological thought.
- CHAPTER IV. Distinguishes between Authority and Infallibility; and discusses the nature of Religious Certainty.
- CHAPTER V. Concludes these preliminary discussions; and goes on to state a theory of Authority, as to its ideal Source and Organ. The "Source" is held to be God Himself, and the "Organ" the Soul in communion with God—This position is explained and defended, and an outline given of its application to the facts of Authority, as it is embodied in the Prophets, the Church and the Christ.
- CHAPTERS VI. VII. and VIII. Expand, apply and illustrate the contentions of Chapter V.