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AUTHORITY IN LIFE

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'THE CHRISTIAN FAITH'

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A group of Roman Catholic and Anglican theologians appointed by the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury respectively, have written a booklet on authority, and recently in Sydney leading Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops met to discuss it. The subject of where authority lies is of great importance, not only in church life, but also in our ordinary social life. Parliament is all the time passing laws; from what authority do the laws get their content? Is it just what happens to be the majority opinion of people? Or is there some higher law by which our opinions ought to be shaped so that hopefully the majority of people's opinion will reflect this higher authority? So too in the law courts the judges are all the time interpreting and applying the law. What criterion do they use? Is it simply their own opinion of what they think is a good idea? Or is there some higher authority to which their consciences and that of everybody should conform? And what about our conscience? Should we take any notice of it? What is the basis of our conscience? What forms it? If it is society, then it is valueless, for there is little reason for thinking society is always right. But we know we ought to obey our conscience, because it is in fact based on a higher law, for if there is a God then of course there is a higher authority, and it goes without saying that we ought to conform to His mind for He has made it. He is the author of our life and nature and we ought to conform to His will as He knows what is best, being the source of our life and our creator. Christians believe we have in the Bible the word of God. The Bible is full of phrases like "thus says the Lord" or "God

said". It follows that what the Bible is teaching, God is teaching us and naturally this has absolute authority over all of God's creation, whether they acknowledge it or not. Moreover, in Jesus of Nazareth God has Himself entered our life, the creator has taken our nature so that Jesus is the divine creator as well as true man. A marvelous truth that God is so gracious as to live and die for us. But it is true and it means that Jesus words and example are of absolute authority because they are those of God Himself. And it is interesting to note that Jesus completely endorsed the authority of the Bible "The scripture cannot be broken" he said, and described the words of the Bible as spoken to us by God.

And so the Bible is of absolute authority. There is always a temptation to whittle this down; you will know this yourself. And I am sorry to say that the booklet on authority is not as clear on the authority of the Bible as it ought to be. But on the other hand, Jesus said clearly that what the Bible teaches, God is saying to us. It is not hard to see what the Bible is teaching. This is especially so in the gospels and in the letters of the apostles. It will require a little more care and reflection to find out what the Bible is teaching in the narrative parts. But if you read the Bible in a modern English translation, especially if you read it with the help of Christian friends and ministers in Church, you won't find difficulty in arriving at the general teaching of the Bible and this should be of absolute authority in your own life and in your own home and we should all endeavour to make it authoritative in our community and laws. It goes without saying that it ought to be of absolute authority in all church matters. It is wonderful that God has spoken to

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us. We should make it our objective to know
what He has said.

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