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# PAUL'S USE OF AUTHORITY AND PERSUASION IN THE CORINTHIAN LETTERS

*Kenneth J. Neumann*

Paul's experiences, as disclosed by the Corinthian correspondence, present us with a fascinating study in the use of various methods in leading and guiding the church. They may also be helpful in our day as the church faces the persistent problem of authority. How can the church's proclamation in word and deed be a powerful means to effect in people the response of faith and commitment to Christ? While past generations of Christians tended to accept the authority of Scripture, the Confessions, and church leadership, many church members now question or resist efforts by their leaders to dominate or control them. They are not unlike the Corinthians, who were anything but docile when confronted by the apostle's authoritative approach. Because of their reactions Paul was forced to write at least four letters to these people.

## PAUL'S AUTHORITY

Paul believed that he possessed authority given to him by God. He was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ and was "separated" for the work of the gospel among the gentiles (Rom. 1:1,5; Gal. 1:15-16). Described as a "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12; 2 Cor. 12:1) or an appearance of Christ (1 Cor. 15:8), this event qualified him as an apostle — one who had "seen Jesus our Lord" (1 Cor. 9:1). The experience was not only a vision but also an instruction in the gospel which he preached later (Gal. 1:12).

Paul was conscious that the grace of God was empowering him as he performed the "priestly service" to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:15-16; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:9). However, under the pressure of real or imagined opposition, Paul was frequently forced to defend the genuineness of his apostolic call and even to speak "as a fool" (2 Cor. 11:21). He claims his call was not from human but divine sources; in fact, during the first fourteen years after his conversion he spent a minimum of time with the apostles

at Jerusalem — fifteen days visiting Cephas three years after his conversion and meeting no others except James (Gal. 1:11-19). He went up to Jerusalem the next time, fourteen years later, “by revelation” from God. After presenting his gospel, he was given the right hand of fellowship from the Jerusalem “pillars”, James, Cephas, and John, to fulfill the mission to the Gentiles with Barnabas (2:1-10). Paul’s call was corroborated by the human leaders of early Christianity.

In his letters Paul the apostle speaks with authority. Most often he compares his relationship to his churches with that of a father-child or father-baby (1 Cor. 3 :1-2; 4:14-15; 14:20; 1 Thess. 2:7,11); even a father-daughter relationship with Christ as the husband. Paul has a “divine jealousy” when it seems the Corinthians are deserting Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-4). Like fathers of that day, he can threaten a church “with a rod” (1 Cor. 4:21). Paul believes that, with the exception of some words to be considered shortly, he is speaking the word of God and Christ is speaking in him (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Cor. 12:19; 13:3; Rom. 15:18). He proclaims the gospel and exhorts his churches to a sanctified life. Even from a distance he can act as a judge over sinful people, such as the incestuous man (1 Cor. 5:3); when he comes, he will not “spare” those who sin by immorality and is ready to “punish every disobedience” (2 Cor. 10:6; 13:2). In many passages Paul speaks authoritatively on particular problem areas, such as marriage and the resurrection (1 Cor. 7 and 15).

In exercising authority Paul uses the Old Testament primarily to support or illustrate his arguments rather than to begin his line of reasoning. Like his contemporaries, he does not shy away from allegorizing it. The Exodus event becomes a Christian baptism, and the provisions of manna and water in the wilderness become the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:1-4). Hagar represents Mount Sinai, “the present Jerusalem”, the old covenant, while Sarah is “the Jerusalem above”, the new covenant (Gal. 4:21-31). Adam, the first man through whom sin and death entered the world (Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15), and Abraham, — “the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:11), play important roles in Paul’s theology, especially his soteriology. The Old Testament has value as the source of the promise of the gospel concerning God’s Son (Rom. 1:2). As Shires states, “The determining factor in Paul’s use of Scripture was his belief in Jesus as the Messiah.”<sup>1</sup> Old Testament passages are understood from a Christological perspective, e.g. Gal. 3:16. However, for Paul the Scripture in whole or in part can be labelled as “the law” (1 Cor. 14:21; Rom. 3:21), a traditional name for Scripture. Although the Christian is no longer under the training of the law in order to obtain salvation (Gal. 3:24-25; Rom. 10:4), the Old Testament serves as “instruction” (Rom. 15:4) and “warnings” against sin (1 Cor. 10:6,11). Paul valued and quoted from the Old Testament writings. In Romans an unusually large percentage of text is composed of quotations or introductions to quotes (18%).

Another source of authority for Paul is early Christian tradition. In 1 Cor. 15:3ff. the apostle reminds the church of the creed-like expression of the gospel that he “received” (from other Christians) and “delivered” to the Corinthians. The Lord’s Supper tradition given to him is cited in 1 Cor. 11:23b-25. Beyond these passages Paul does not clearly label the source of his expressions of faith, but many more traditional formulae exist in his writings. The short confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3), certainly did not originate with Paul. He accepted and passed on

1. Henry M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 56.

the valued expressions of faith of other Christians, especially those who were “apostles before me” (Gal. 1:17). The full extent of these traditions, which may also include hymns, liturgical phrases, etc., is a matter of much debate, but the point that Paul considers these traditions important enough to “deliver” is clear (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15).<sup>2</sup>

Among these traditions are words of the Lord, which Paul cites at least four times (1 Cor. 7:10; 9:14; 11:23ff.; 1 Thess. 4:15f.) and probably many more, e.g., Rom. 12-14. The early church collected both sayings of Jesus before his crucifixion and the sayings of the risen Lord spoken to prophets in the early church. There was a close almost indistinguishable connection between the Lord and the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18), so that a word of the prophet in the Spirit could be a word of the risen Lord (cf. Rev. 1:10,17ff.).<sup>3</sup>

In the above passages Paul speaks authoritatively, but in a number of other passages he admits openly that he does not speak as an apostle; at least he does not expect total obedience when he gives his “opinion” on the spiritual couples (1 Cor. 7:25,40) or the collection (2 Cor. 8:10) or when he grants a “concession” to prevent immorality (1 Cor. 7:6). He states explicitly that his words in these instances are “not commands of the Lord”. In giving these opinions, however, he acts “as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy” (1 Cor. 7:25), and he thinks that he has the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 7:40). His opinions merit respect because of the God who is active in his life.

Finally, the long section in 2 Corinthians where Paul boasts about his race, apostleship, hard work, persecutions, dangers, anxiety, revelations, visions, and apostolic miracles is clearly designated as words spoken “not with the Lord’s authority but as a fool” or “talking like a madman” (2 Cor. 11:16-12:13). He was “forced” to speak this way because of the actions of the Corinthians. All of these passages need to be understood and applied in light of their context.

## 1 CORINTHIANS

Having briefly examined Paul’s view of his authority, we now look at his encounter with an enlightened church which did not bow unquestioningly to his commands. Some time after his founding mission at Corinth and prior to the composition of the document we call 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian congregation. The one item which that letter certainly contained was a warning against associating or eating with immoral persons (*pornoi*) or persons guilty of “greed” or someone who was “an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber.” By that he meant only the immoral within the Christian community, not “the immoral of this world” (1 Cor. 5:9-11).<sup>4</sup>

In this letter he probably also urged the Corinthians to take part in the collection for

2. For further discussion, see A.M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors* (Revised edition; London: SCM, 1961), pp. 15-44, 117-26; Edgar Krentz, “The Early Dark Ages of the Church — Some Reflections,” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLI (1970), 67-85.

3. Hunter, pp. 44-45.

4. Many scholars consider 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 to be a fragment of this earlier letter. The passage warns against associating with unbelievers and touching anything unclean; it fits poorly with its context. Cf. John C. Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of I Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965) pp. 235-37; Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard Clark Kee (Revised ed.: Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), pp. 287-88, 291-92.

the "poor among the saints at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:25-32; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9). 1 Cor. 16 assumes the Corinthians already know about the collection and are only wondering about procedural matters. The collection arose from the apostolic meeting in Jerusalem where Paul and Barnabas were given the mission to the Gentiles and agreed to at least one additional request, i.e., to "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10), "clearly a veiled reference to the Church at Jerusalem."<sup>5</sup>

The apostolic meeting also attempted to settle the issue of whether circumcision would be required of gentiles. Paul reports that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised and adds, "Those, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me", i.e., to Paul's gospel (Gal. 2:3,6). However, items could have been added (such as the stipulations mentioned in Acts 15) which in Paul's mind added nothing to his gospel. Thus, by means of this letter Paul may also have tried to direct the Corinthians "to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity" (*porneia*, Acts 15:29).<sup>6</sup> This helps to explain why Paul is concerned with defending both the view that eating meat offered to idols is right (8:4-6; 10:25-27, 29b-30) and the view that not eating such meat is right when it is in consideration of others (8:7-13; 10:28-29a). He is thereby defending both his own personal view and the agreement of the apostolic conference. He agreed to the latter apparently because it involved little personal sacrifice — he was willing to be "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:20-22) — and it gave him authority to conduct his mission to the gentiles "more or less with a free hand".<sup>7</sup> However, this probably involved Paul in a change of approach from his founding mission. In addition to his own freer attitudes, he was now defending also the attitudes of the Jerusalem church and the "weak" Christians.

To understand how the Corinthians reacted to Paul's earliest letter, a look at the structure of 1 Corinthians is helpful. The Corinthians responded with a letter containing several items (1 Cor. 7:1). Paul refers to these items most clearly whenever he uses the introductory formula, "Now concerning . . ." (*peri de*, 7:1,24; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). The letter was not rebellious in tone, but Paul knew his position was threatened (4:3-5; 9:3), especially in view of the oral information given to him by "Chloe's people" and the probable bearers of the Corinthian letter, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1:11; 16:17). They reported dissension concerning human leaders, such as Paul, Cephas, or Apollos, even factions at celebrations of the Lord's Table, and a case of incest not dealt with by church discipline (1:10-5:13; 11:17-34). Other sections in 1 Corinthians may be classified according to the two consistently different ways in which Paul responds to the letter from the Corinthians and the oral information.<sup>8</sup>

In response to the letter from Corinth, Paul's "treatment is systematic and the tone calm . . . The reply looks toward the future; there is no criticism of the past behaviour

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5. Erwin Buck, "Christian Unity: The Perspective from Galatia," *Consensus*, IV (1978), 6; Hurd, p. 266.
  6. Olof Linton, "The Third Aspect. A Neglected Point of View. A Study in Gal. i-ii and Acts ix and xv," *Studia Theologica*, III (1950), 86-95; Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM, 1959), p. 100; Hurd, pp. 266-69.
  7. Hurd, p. 264.
  8. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-93; 1 Cor. 6:1-11 comes from oral information, 6:12-20 is a transitional passage, and 5:9-13a, 11:2-16, and chapter 15 are reactions to the Corinthian letter.

of the Corinthians . . . Paul seeks to be as persuasive as possible, appealing to the authority of Jesus, scripture, common sense, custom, and his own apostolic commission . . . Often he quotes slogans from the Corinthians' letter in order to qualify their statements."<sup>9</sup> For example, in chapter seven Paul calmly discusses questions on marriage. The first verse already cites a statement with which Paul personally agreed but most likely also quotes the Corinthians' letter, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman."<sup>10</sup> Immediately he qualifies the verse, "But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." In a legal fashion he gives his or the Lord's opinion on various cases — the unmarried and widows, the married, the married who separate, the man with an unbelieving wife, the wife with an unbelieving husband, and the unbelieving partner initiating divorce proceedings (7:8-16). Finally, the special case of the celibate couples is treated (7:25-38).

Paul does not merely assert authority but gives some reasons for his opinions, such as "the temptation to immorality" (7:2), "conjugal rights" (7:3), and "lack of self-control" (7:5,9,36). One should remain in one's present state due to "the impending distress" (7:26,29,31) and avoid getting married due to potential anxieties about "worldly affairs" and pleasing the mate (7:32-35). Throughout this passage he never criticizes the Corinthians' current practices on marriage and celibacy. Other passages in 1 Corinthians make greater use of slogans of the Corinthians (8:1,4,23), Old Testament quotations or allusions (9:9; 10:1-10), appeals to common sense (10:15; 11:13), and custom (11:16). However, chapter seven can serve as a representative example of Paul exercising his authority in a directive fashion but mixed with attempts to be persuasive.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, in response to the oral information Paul received, "His tone is aroused, even angry . . . He condemns the past behaviour of the Corinthians; his only concern is the correction and prevention of the abuse in question . . . In general he does not appeal to supporting authorities, but speaks for himself . . . He does not discuss or seek to persuade; instead he speaks authoritatively."<sup>12</sup> Chapters five and six offer good examples. Paul attacks the arrogance and boasting of the Corinthians (5:2,6) who tolerate an incestuous man in their midst. The apostle calls for the man's removal from their assembly (5:2-5,13). Very little attempt is made to persuade except for the analogy of leaven in a lump of dough and the mention of Christ as Paschal lamb (5:6-8). In chapter six Paul employs the "tactic of bombarding" the readers with many questions, especially questions beginning with the words "Do you not know . . .?" (*ouk oidate*), a tactic far more common in 1 Corinthians than in any other Pauline letter.<sup>13</sup>

In general, Paul feels he has the right to exert authority and believes the Corinthians

9. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 67, notes this and other probable quotes.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-69.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86. In 1 Corinthians 19% of all sentences (defined as ending with a period, question mark, or colon) are questions; for 2 Corinthians the figure is 4%, with most of the questions from chapters 10-13.

will listen to him. The letter is a mixture of calm argumentation and authoritative directions.

## 2 CORINTHIANS

By the time 2 Corinthians is written, great changes have occurred. Scattered throughout the letter are various hints of the events which took place following Paul's sending of the letter we know as 1 Corinthians. The apostle mentions that he did not want to "make another painful visit" (2:1), implying there had been a painful visit prior to the composition of 2 Corinthians. This visit was unexpected since his original plans called for going to Corinth by way of Macedonia first (1 Cor. 16:5), but news of trouble must have reached him somehow (probably through Timothy, 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11).

1 Corinthians was unsuccessful in overcoming the Corinthian divisions and problems. At Corinth one person in particular caused Paul pain on his visit (2:5; 7:12), although many were guilty and needed to repent (7:9-12; 13:2). Paul returned to Ephesus and wrote a letter "out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you" (2:4). The purpose of the letter, sometimes called the "intermediate letter", was to "test" them to see if they would be obedient to Paul's directions on "the matter" causing pain to Paul and to the congregation (7:11; 2:5,9). In defending himself Paul may have commended himself as an apostle (3:1). The letter may have also indicated Paul's intention to come shortly, for later he takes great pains to explain why he did not come as planned (1:15-23). These features and others have convinced a good number of scholars that 2 Cor. 10-13 preserves a portion of this letter.<sup>14</sup>

Space will not permit a full consideration of the complex arguments favoring this or various other theories on the integrity of 2 Corinthians. However, one key problem with viewing 2 Cor. 10-13 as part of the intermediate letter is the apparently different opponents in the two letters — the latter deals with one person who sinned against Paul, while 2 Cor. 10-13 combats attitudes of the Jewish-Christian "superlative apostles" held by congregational members (11:5,22). Another problem is 2 Cor. 12:18, which is most likely the first visit described in 2 Cor. 8:6 rather than some unknown earlier visit.<sup>15</sup> However, it may be that the style and tone of 2 Cor. 10-13 are similar to the intermediate letter and that Paul repeats some of the arguments used in that letter, such as his boasting about his apostleship and "weaknesses" in comparison with his opponents (11:21-12:10), the warnings of his imminent coming to Corinth, the challenge to improve and change so that Paul will not have to be "severe" in his use of the Lord's authority (12:14-13:11) or have to punish disobedience in person (10:2-8).

Titus either personally brought the intermediate letter, or he went a little later to Corinth to observe the effect of the letter (2 Cor. 7:5ff.). He was to meet Paul at Troas according to some pre-arranged timetable. Although there was a good opportunity to preach there, Paul's anxiety about news from Corinth caused him to move on to

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14. Kummel, pp. 279-93.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-91.

Macedonia (2:12-13). Finally, Titus came to him with the good news of the Corinthians' longing, mourning, and zeal for Paul and their obedience, fear, and trembling (7:7-15). The majority had punished sufficiently the one who had caused Paul pain, so that the apostle requests the church to forgive him (2:6-10). His letter had been effective in regaining their confidence in him. Yet the strange fact is that, unless one contends that 2 Cor. 10-13 is part of the intermediate letter, the letter which brings about the repentance of the Corinthians is no longer extant. This does not affect the main argument very much, since the main thrusts of the letter are clear, and 2 Cor. 10-13 probably supplies a similar sort of letter except for minor differences.

The news of the Corinthian "godly grief" and repentance encouraged Paul to write what we call 2 Corinthians. In it, the apostle expresses his joy over the Corinthians' change of heart (7:4,16) and sends Titus and two unnamed apostles of the churches to complete the collection at Corinth before he comes (chapters 8-9). The last chapters express fear that perhaps the Corinthians will not be as Paul wishes (12:20-22) and especially defends himself against charges made by the "superlative apostles" regarding his speaking abilities and his renunciation of financial gifts but acceptance of collection money (10:10; 11:7; 12:16).

While the later chapters of 2 Corinthians bear resemblance to some part of 1 Corinthians (chapters 3-4), the earlier chapters (1-9) present a major shift in Paul's approach. In a gracious appealing manner he defends the apostolic office and pulls out all stops by using every persuasive appeal he can imagine to win their confidence and to urge participation in the collection. He points to his love for the Corinthians that caused him to refrain from visiting Corinth a third time in order to spare them pain (1:23; 2:1). The previous letter calling for obedience caused him much anguish and tears in its composition (2:4). Even afterward for a while he regretted sending it but was not sorry when he saw that it caused them the kind of grief which lead to repentance (7:8-9). Despite their recent turbulent encounters Paul can still assert that his letter of recommendation as an apostle is the Corinthian church (3:2-3). Several verses are a defense against charges of corruption and cunning underhanded ways (4:2; 5:12; 6:3,12; 7:2; 8:20-21). Apparently such rumors or charges were not yet completely put to rest.

The appeals to participate in the collection are especially rich and varied; they are also an indication of how little Paul can use his apostolic authority in the crisis with the Corinthians. He appeals to their sense of competition with other churches as he notes the great response of the Macedonians to the collection (8:1-5). The Corinthians are urged to "excel in this gracious work" (the collection), just as they "excel in everything — in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us" (8:7) — a remarkable compliment.

Paul does not command them to participate as in 1 Corinthians but only advises them to do so as a sign of love (8:8,10; 9:5,7). Christ's exchange of wealth for poverty for the sake of all people, including the Corinthians, should move them to give (8:9). Paul notes the Corinthians' material abundance relative to the Judean Christians' need (8:13-14). Titus' interest and eagerness to go to Corinth, even without Paul's urging this time, should encourage the church (8:16-17,23; cf. 7:13-14).

The unnamed apostles, one of whom was chosen by "the churches" as a companion to Paul on the collection journey, should ease any suspicions about the integrity of



Paul and his collection (8:18-21). Since the Corinthian collection will be given in the presence of other Christian churches, the church should give proof of its love (8:24). Paul boosts the Corinthian sense of pride by mentioning that he has been boasting about the Corinthians to the Macedonians (8:24; 9:1-2), and therefore he is sending the brothers ahead to prevent any possible embarrassment to the Corinthians (or to Paul), in case they should not be ready (9:3-5).

A Jewish proverb is cited suggesting that if the Corinthians sow bountifully, i.e., give generously, they will reap bountifully, i.e., have rich rewards (9:6). The freely and cheerfully given donation is desired (9:7). Verses 9-11 note the blessings on the Corinthians for great generosity. He holds up the vision of a future outpouring of thanksgiving by the Jerusalem Christians (9:11-13a) both for the Corinthian obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ and for their contribution which is, in one sense, for all Christians in the common fellowship (9:13). The Jerusalem Christians will be moved to long and pray for the Corinthians because of the surpassing grace of God in them (9:14).

A special feature of these chapters is the theological terminology used as synonyms for the collection — for example, *charis*, “favor” or “gracious work”, *koinonia*, “taking part” (8:4) or “contribution” (9:13), *diakonia*, “relief” or “service” (9:12-13), and *eulogia*, “gift” (9:5). The sensitive subject of money was handled in a way more palatable to a theologian and his hearers. In these chapters Paul does not merely mention these key words individually but in impressive chains (8:4; 9:12-13). This multitude of arguments and appeals is intended to persuade and win rather than compel or force the Corinthians to finish what they had begun at least a year earlier (8:10-11; 9:7).<sup>16</sup>

Paul’s letter seems to have succeeded, for he reports to the Romans that Achaia was “pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26). However, he feels that they were obligated to contribute — “for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings they *ought* also to be of service to them in material blessings” (emphasis mine) (15:27).

## CONCLUSIONS

One can look at the Corinthian letters and take a pragmatic view. What did not work with these sophisticated spiritual people was the assertion of sheer power and authority, whether traditional or personal, with little use of persuasive argumentation. Paul’s first letter was essentially of this type, and the letter called 1 Corinthians is a mixture of the use of sheer authority and reasonable calm argumentation. The letters which were helpful in Paul’s situation (intermediate letter and 2 Corinthians) consist of honest expressions of feelings about his apostleship and concern for the Corinthians as well as a variety of methods of persuasion, which enabled Paul to win the confidence of the Corinthians and engender enthusiasm and action with regard to the collection.

This study of Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians is important for at least two reasons. First, a plausible sequence of events and sequence of letters is obtained

16. The infrequent use of the imperative mood in 2 Cor. 1-9 supports this (0.9% of all verbs, compared with 15% in 1 Cor. 7 and 12% in 1 Cor. 14-16).

which can assist theologians to place Paul's words on a particular topic in proper relationship to other passages. Paul's words are often cited to justify positions on various issues, but they need to be situated in their broad historical context. It is not necessarily true that his later letters represent more mature and valuable teaching on a particular topic. However, by a knowledge of the order and relationships of Paul's expressions one can better evaluate their applicability to our age.

Second, Paul's experience with authority suggests that merely quoting Scripture or the Confessions is not sufficient for our age. The exercising of pastoral authority without presenting convincing reasons for particular positions will not be effective. In his most convincing letters Paul expressed not only his thoughts and instructions but also persuasive arguments for his positions and his honest deep feelings about himself, his role as an apostle, and concern for the faith of the Corinthians. Krister Stendahl calls for a "new seriousness about firsthand religious experience" and challenges theologians and pastors to speak

more honestly out of their experience rather than out of Scripture and tradition . . . I urge you to be authentic in your witness, even if it sounds ten times more naive than the best sermon that you finally managed to get into powerful style for a homiletics class. To be authentic in your ministry, let Scripture and tradition shape you and soak you, but let the words be yours. Only so can they be the vehicle and the living witness, and if that is so and you are not caught in something oversize, then you are a child of God."<sup>17</sup>

This religious experience will not be a misguided subjectivism if the Scriptures and Confessions continue to inform and shape the theologian and pastor, and it will be an honest authentic witness capable of being used by the Holy Spirit as a means of grace in the lives of people.

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17. Krister Stendahl, "Ministry Without Fear," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLIII (1971), 394,396.