

Revelation and Authority

- General and special revelation
- Religious authority

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General and Special Revelation

- Revelation = God's self-disclosure.
- General revelation = God's self-disclosure to all humans or to humans in general. Communicated naturally.
- Special revelation = God's self-disclosure to certain special or specific persons. Communicated supernaturally. God's acts, words, incarnation, record of these in Bible.

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General and Special Revelation

- Models of revelation (A. Dulles)
 - Revelation as doctrine (propositional)
 - Revelation as inner experience (feeling)
 - Revelation as dialectical presence (encounter)
 - Revelation as new awareness
 - Revelation as historical (or as history: W. Pannenberg)
- Still some paradox and mystery.

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General and Special Revelation

- Is natural theology possible? (theology from general revelation only, via human reason)
 - GR + NT \implies SR (Thomas Aquinas)
 - GR but no NT (Reformers)
 - GR and NT over SR (Enlightenment rationalists)
 - Reject both GR and NT (Barth)
 - Blend GR and SR (Pannenberg)
 - GR too general to build doctrine of God (Grenz)

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Religious Authority

- Authority: "God-given right and power to command and be obeyed" (Thorsen 27).
- External principles of authority:
 - Sacred book (Bible)
 - Authoritative person (perhaps founder; Jesus)
 - Community (church, tradition)
- Internal principles of authority:
 - Reason
 - Experience (including private word from Spirit)

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Religious Authority

- Early church: Jesus, apostles, rule of faith, councils, creeds, canon of Scripture.
- Medieval period: authoritative church oversees Scripture and Tradition.
- Reformers: primacy of *sola scriptura*.
- Enlightenment: reason, natural law.
- Pietism, revivals: Wesleyan quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason, experience).

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Religious Authority

- Liberal Protestantism: experience.
- Neoorthodoxy: non-propositional revelation; encounter with God.
- Process theology: panentheism (all things are in God; God evolves along with world).
- Liberation theologies: experience, praxis.
- Postmodernism: non-foundational, subjective, contextual.

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