Revelation and Authority

- General and special revelation
- Religious authority

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.

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.
General and Special Revelation

- Is natural theology possible? (theology from general revelation only, via human reason)
  - GR + NT = 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)

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)

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).
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.