

*Power Versus Authority: Sacrifice Lied or  
Applied?*

Conor A. Coutts

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Abstract:

We live in an age that is both desperate for moral authority while simultaneously not knowing what genuine moral authority is. Authority from merely a standard of wealth and political office is not morally legitimate but instead merely powerful. I seek to differentiate between power and authority, asserting that it is through a sense of sacrifice and a disregard for popularity that moral authority is attained. Looking to the Abrahamic faiths that assert such a sacrifice and humility, the life of Christ and subsequent Christian tradition serve as an ideal practice of this. Such a practice of authority and how it is interpreted is significantly influenced by art and mass media, therefore I will analyze two films that display the struggle between power and authority and described by what means the authoritative figure has to go through to triumph. Through engagement with the experiences in film, a necessity of community arises, and how communities choose power over authority largely comes from the decision to either serve the self or serve the other.

In determining a notion of justice by which to live our lives and advocate for, we are often influenced by external belief systems, even if we may prefer to think that each moral code is original. These moral codes can be influenced by politics, religion, culture and often intersect all three. However, the fundamental question is determining whom to listen to in the first place when it comes to moral advice. The concept of a role model by which to emulate is accompanied by popular, not unpopular characteristics that they exemplify. I will be examining this, making a distinction between the powerful who are interested in their own preservation and the authoritative who are committed to a greater good and exemplify a degree of both dissidence and sacrifice. The Abrahamic faiths, specifically Christianity provide a rich history (though not an infallible one) and moral code that stresses virtuous piety and temperance for a greater good, and makes its adherents aware of the existence and dangers of evil. Similarly, art has been an effective escape from reality, while maintaining tremendous influence and allegory to it.

Therefore, I will be analyzing two films, *The Night of the Hunter* (1955) and *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). Both films portray a struggle between good and evil with good shining through sacrifice and even ostracization instead of glorification. Through this, I will state the fundamental difference between power and authority, and advocate that it is in authority, not power that one obtains and exercises morality. Though power and authority are used often interchangeably with one another and many are blind to the illegitimacy of the powerful, and are therefore frequently unable to distinguish it from authority. However, it is authority, which is a selfless sacrifice for the greater good that gives one morality (hence moral authority), such a sacrifice is often countercultural and even unpopular but the disdain experienced by such a sacrifice is insignificant compared to the fruits of legitimacy that the morally authoritative possess.

Before outlining how the cohesion of this paper will differentiate between power and authority and provide a claim that morality is found in authority through sacrifice, definitions of essential terms are needed. I define power as the ability to have dominion or control over a certain population in an illegitimate way. Such illegitimacy stems from the failure to act ethically and protect the population that the powerful are tasked with governing, instead deceit, exploitation, and selfishness often become the values by which they live, which in turns strips away their legitimacy as moral actors. After analyzing the pitfalls of such power I will explain moral authority and why Christianity offers an exemplary moral authority for all human beings both in and out of the faith. As defined above, moral authority is selfless sacrifice for the greater good that gives one legitimacy as being authoritative. Legitimacy is the qualifying state of being able to have authority, be that in leading or following. I will then describe the influence of art as a medium in aiding in the process of displaying authority, and how both *The Night of the Hunter*

and *The Passion of the Christ* have protagonists who display genuine love by practicing sacrifice, and therefore displaying moral authority, despite the attempts by the powerful to hinder them. I will then conclude with an analysis on the necessity of community in sustaining the very sacrificial practices that the films portray in their display of authority.

The key characteristic of authority is having legitimacy in declaring a certain action. Throughout history, such legitimacy has been incorrectly recognized through many despots and charlatans who masquerade as having authority but are illegitimate as they trade the life and soul of their constituencies for their own personal advance. This shallow despotic power based on deceit is a type of public voyeurism. In his 2011 article entitled “*What Peeping Tom Did Wrong*”, John Draeger analyzes the philosophical notions of why voyeurism is wrong, but also the several nuances that accompany it, this is analogous to the way the powerful corrupt notions of and accessibility to authority<sup>1</sup>. In the legend of Lady Godiva, wherein Lady Godiva, an English noblewoman rode nude through the streets of Coventry upon the celebration of her husband, the Earl of Mercia’s liberation of local peasants. Everyone in the village was to stay securely in their homes when this occurred, with blinds drawn and eyes averted away from Godiva’s nudity. However, one man, named Tom did not stay blinded from this, but deviously gazed upon Godiva’s nude body, thus starting the name “peeping Tom”. One may ask how the concept of voyeurism relates to power, and it does so by serving as a prime example of the prioritization of the self over the good of the many, as the illegitimate and powerful use dishonesty and hiding to preserve their reign. Just like power, voyeurism involves intrinsic deceit, whether it is through a window or peephole there is a violation of one’s right to privacy and respect that is done through covert operations. The naturally dominant advantage of the

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<sup>1</sup> Draeger, John. "What Peeping Tom Did Wrong." JSTOR. February 2011. Accessed November 14, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41472570>.

voyeur is such that it allows them to be in control of the scenario as the victim is not only exploited by means of violation and possible surveillance through photographs or recording devices, but by not being aware to the crime in the first place. Similarly, those who make conscious decisions to lie, cheat, or steal in places of power have the dominant role but are often discreet and unapologetic in their injustices. In fact, they cause further scandal by bolstering themselves up as the desideratum for moral action and seek to be an almost deity through a cult of personality<sup>2</sup>. In the likes of the voyeur, the despot has a deficit in their life and is achieving what they view as their right to happiness. However, there is often more than meets the eye, as many abusers in roles of power compensate for their own insecurities or feelings of depravity. Instead of engaging in humble sacrifice to conquer feelings of abuse, envy, or anxiety, they seek domination over their perceived enemy. That is why, for example, many voyeurs or sexual predators use their physical or social privilege to dispense punishment for their inner hatred of women or other groups. However, just as the voyeur may reject help through some degree of conversion to contain their urges, the despot rejects occasions for conversion likewise, opting to deceive and exploit sometimes with no consequence. With the allegorical comparison of the deceit in voyeurism, one gains insight into how the powerful use similar methods of deceit to persuade their constituencies of their legitimacy, even though the interests of the powerful are primarily themselves instead of the public at large.

The struggle to find authority is profound as the powerful often manifest their seize for domination in multifaceted political spheres, but are not limited to them, as greedy individualism can often occur through cultural practices that may have initial practicality, but when overused can lead to a separation of moral actors within communities. An example of such a cultural

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

practice is the greed within materialism. As Hannah Arendt once wrote “...authority has vanished from the modern world”. Though nations were being sustained, wars won, and populations liberated, the driving force of all of the perceived good was not done by authority. As Arendt realized in her generation, so too is it in ours. The bitter truth about the nature of our western society is that materialism is a strong currency that drives people to betray the potential for authority that lives within them. Such a greed causes great spiritual damage to the surroundings of an individual, not just unto themselves. Moreover, the glamour of a life wherein the crashing waves of avarice flounce rapidly is one that is accessible to anyone, whether they be in a political leadership capacity or not. It is in the very notion of competition that often leads one astray into thinking that they can be victorious without preparing and suffering for victory. Just like the drugs used in contemporary professional sports, one commits to a vocational steroid, losing the love that establishes them as legitimate. The truth is difficult because the often grueling, ostracizing nature of standing up for the truth is not conducive to the cultural landscape that we currently occupy. Though the rewards of enduring the sacrifice needed to give truth to communities, protect the vulnerable, and make positive, lasting change as a moral actor are great, many do not take them for they are imprisoned by their own preservation of reputation.

Moral authority embodies the notion of using humility to help those in need. For example, the ability to know and announce that human beings are fallen individuals and need a constant presence of support. Such a support system may help to prevent lewd acts from occurring, be they the power of domination or overt voyeurism. The notion of trading one’s image for the truth, is exactly what Christianity is founded upon. Telling one the truth (the state of being reflective of reality), when accommodated by good intentions, always results in legitimate justice. As Christianity teaches, God sent his only Son for the salvation of sins, so that

those who have faith in him would “not perish but have eternal life”<sup>3</sup>. Such salvation values not wealth or status, as power will lead its followers to believe, but instead values actions, rewarding the moral and punishing the immoral, with morality being found in the intrinsic sacrifice in which love abides. For Christ does not threaten, deceive, or profit from a following and is in fact a pariah for this very maintenance of sacrifice. In enduring death for the salvation of all of humanity, the motivation to follow Christ and lay down one's life for him comes in his authority through sacrifice. It is the very notion of death, the ultimate price that Christ exercises his legitimacy for sacrifice and martyrdom. Such a death would fall short if it had no implications for generations to follow. Instead, those who strive for the good works and faith in Christ find themselves, for one reason after the other persecuted and martyred<sup>4</sup>. Alternatively, those who settle for comfort instead of virtue by trust in man instead of divine will fall subject to pleasure but not to legitimate authority.

Though many gain authority through the pious imitation of Christ in faith, neither Christian piety alone is by no means requisite in attaining authority. For Christianity has no outright possession on the will to sacrifice for the good of the other, and reject powerful figures as these ideals of being morally authoritative apply to all of humanity. Mahatma Gandhi, for example exemplified a sacrificial life in his endurance of pain and unpopularity for the defense of the truth of affirming the dignity of all persons. Opportunities for authoritative sacrifice are available to all, though often manifest themselves in a religious belief system that benefits in having an established moral code. I use Christianity as an exemplary method of authority not as a prohibition to authority for the non-Christian but as an ideal illustration of the countercultural

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<sup>3</sup> John 3:16

<sup>4</sup> Heffernan, Thomas J. "Martyrdom, Charisma, and Imitation: Paths to Christian Sanctity." TLA Religion Database with ATLASerials. Winter 2010. Accessed November 14, 2017.

sacrifice for the good, achieved in the life of Christ. The perils of documenting the journey of vulnerability, (such as with Christ's or Ghandi's) as means to authority have long been an expression through artistic measures. Though moral authority may seem to be an endangered species, the exemplifying, deeply felt experiences of it through art can inspire and grant hope to the ethically crestfallen.

Art allows for the expression of various aspects of humanity in other ways than words. This is especially true in displaying moral authority triumphing over despotic power. Through the cinematic art, personified allegory comes alive to persuade and shock eager audiences. High points of artistic agency, such as the Renaissance birthed liberation in thought from the freely accepted practice of artistic trades. This gave the artist the opportunity to earn meaningful wages while also giving a sense of style to the subjects they breathed life into. There is always, however a particular burden in artistically representing the divine<sup>5</sup>. All of the tenets of artistic capacities are used when attempting this: satire, romance, faith, etc. In these two selected films, the directors use their authorship to form a narrative about the wills and hurdles that both antagonist and protagonist face. In such illustrations, there is an apparent yearning for the fullness of love. Love in art has transcended both sex and gender, being practiced by a greater love, exceeding mere *eros*, (erotic love) into a binding *caritas*, (christian love). Through this *caritas*, film has deeply upheld the salvific gaze in the good triumphing over the evil. For it is through art that messages are spread and marginalized voices heard, with both identities new and old represented, each film aims at a wrenching persuasion of the moral actor being legitimate.

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<sup>5</sup> Beunders, Henri. "The End of Arrogance, the Advent of Persuasion: Public Art in a Multicultural Society." *The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 51 (April 1, 2007): 42-57. Accessed November 20, 2017. JSTOR.

In the two films, the ancient practice of art as persuasion is used to convey the false idols of past and present and the ultimate justice in sacrifice. In both, the directors *mise-en-scene* through lighting, camera positioning, and dialogue is used to conduct a relationship between good and evil. This is hardly new in the area of cinema, as countless films to-date have done likewise. However, there is a particular relationship of Christian virtue in each film that asks “Who are the false prophets?” those who present themselves as loving egalitarians but want only blood spilled for their personal gain. In *Night of the Hunter* the concept of deception to signify power is used heavily, where it is often most vulnerable- the family. As a quaint West Virginia nuclear family is torn apart with the father, Ben Harper’s capture and imprisonment, for the murder of men and the robbery of \$10,000. Before he leaves, Mr. Harper demands that his son John take care of his daughter, Perl and swear to never reveal the location of the stolen loot, to which they both solemnly swear. Such a promise, though it may seem complacent with the crime, actually prioritizes the protection of the vulnerable as an obligation to sacrifice. In this case, John sacrifices the potential desire to share the wealth for the good of his sister. The family is now left neutered and susceptible to tragedy without a guardian. Before his hanging, Mr. Harper reveals to his cellmate that he has stolen loot and his children have further information on it. This is problematic because his cellmate, Reverend Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum), a serial killer and master deceiver who puts upon the personae of a righteous Christian preacher, immediately starts to stew in his plans for selfish domination.

Upon Mr. Harper's death, things change for the Harper family as they are met with the perils of death and destruction. Visually, the use of shadows project Powell, a heavy-set man donned in black above the white walls and young innocent faces of the Harper children, signifying his release from prison and his identity born anew- a stalker meeting his prey. He is

seen almost as a statue of death outside their front gate, singing, ironically the old Protestant hymn “*Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*”, which describes that one ought to lean on Christ for permanent security. The visual aesthetics utilized in the film aid in highlighting the power that drives Powell’s quest for crime. The Harper widow, Mrs. Willa Harper (Shelly Winters) is introduced to Powell by her overzealous boss Mrs. Spoon (Evelyn Varden), who is immediately put into an airtight trance by Powell’s sophistry and demands that he stay for the town picnic. <sup>[3]</sup> When Powell takes interest in Mrs. Harper it is John, (the young son whose job of continuing his father’s legacy he takes with great seriousness), who is skeptical of Powell’s motives, it is with this skepticism even at such a young age wherein John begins to struggle with his own identity as being taken seriously as an authoritative figure, a result of the sacrifice he promised when assuming the role of guardian he inherited from his father before him. Willa’s face is seen looking saddened and shocked by the recent loss of her husband, but she is influenced by Powell’s flamboyant masquerade of caring about the family’s health and becomes a subject of his plan, thus, Powell becomes a stealthy voyeur in his ability to lure a clean conscience to the ill wills of power. It is here that Powell’s convincing a grieving widow of his legitimacy (though he lacks it) serves as allegory to the despot who instills trust their people, even though it results in their own detriment. When they wed, John, devoted to upholding his legitimacy as authoritative despite a newly acquired control that Powell has on over him as stepfather heightens his war with Powell. Thus, he embodies the authority in his pre-ordained vocation by his father to never reveal the location of the loot and to protect his sister as his only destiny, mirroring the paternalistic commandments to represent the sanctity and reputation of the family found in all three Abrahamic religions.

With Powell's first attempts to learn the location of the money, he leans over John in a degrading, cantankerous manner as his shadow engulfs young John's. Yet, John stands upright and does not wither, despite Powell's threats of punishment and his tired proclamations that he is the new patriarch of the family. This is allegory of the intimidation the powerful use, unable to rely on either faith or reason for convincing a dissident that they are correct, they turn to violence, through which often power manifests itself. As the film ensues, Powell's character is revealed to have no limit in stealing material wealth, while the characterization of John as a dutiful servant grow likewise.

It is through Powell's thrill of power that he is able to win over people with his charm offensive, only to subject them into submission or death later on. John's vocation as guardian, despite his young age and taciturn persona represent pure authority, as he embodies the covenant of his father, who, though flawed is representative of the family values illustrated by Christ. Powell betrays the role of guardian of a vulnerable and needy family for his free-reign as a despot. The greatest form of vandalism here is the destruction of the entire family that Powell trades, and shows this when he kills his new wife, leaving the two children orphaned, simultaneously increasing the capacity for John to give-in to him. Persistent, Powell decides to engage in relationships that are influential with his newly acquired children. However he only views them as keys to vaults of cash and control, instead of impressionable children who need structure and support.

Powell, pursues the children who have fled his abusive hand, a rejection of the construct of parental custody representing moral authority. John and Perl proceed to travel down the river all night in an abandoned boat, as Powell's search for them presses on. However, the notion of salvation is introduced in Mrs. Cooper, a woman they encounter after traveling who has a

reputation for taking in stray youths. Acting as the saving sign from the Divine, Mrs. Cooper reinserts the notion of Jesus into the song that Powell sings to alert others of his presence, “Leaning on the Everlasting Arm”. Her adoption of the two children into a fair and God-fearing home shows her hunger for teaching virtue to the next generation. She also recognizes the evil Powell, having experienced it herself and resisted, which bares resemblance to the struggle Christ has for 40 days in the desert before his Passion. Polishing a shotgun at the “Reverend”, she warns him that she can use the same weapon he uses against his victims to silence and hold him captive. The authority Cooper has in saving the children from the grip of the liar that foretells the nature of a just society even when burdened by the threats of scandal. It is complemented by the authority John displays in standing up against a man who was socially and physically privileged to him, unbent in his commitment to show the love of familial love for his sister. In turn, Powell’s actions are punished as the very towns people who were once enchanted by his deceit recognize his illegitimacy and hunger for power, as they advocate for his execution.

Mel Gibson’s magnum opus, *The Passion of the Christ* is an exemplary illustration of power versus authority. The entire event of the passion of Christ within Christian theology is one that illustrates and builds upon a tremendous suffering in order to obey and to adhere God’s will. From the 40 days of suffering in the desert to the crucifixion itself, Christ’s suffering through torture bears fruits of endurance <sup>[5]</sup>. The assurance that the personal agent of salvation is representative of such tremendous suffering how’s that adherents to Christianity should expect it likewise. Acting in *Persona Christi* Christians crave to mirror their lives after Christ with the central commandment of loving God above all things and your neighbor as yourself. A savior who says to “turn the other cheek” when one is verbally accosted and appeals to his Father to

“forgive them for they know not what they do”, will clearly bring about an adherence that is ostracized for going against the normative wanton desires of society.

The music and scenic effects to demonstrate the great involvement of God in sending his son for the salvation of sin brings about a most ominous mood in Gibsons authorship<sup>6</sup>. The first notifications of Christ’s moral authority persevering over the power of the systemic oppressors is seen among the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a politically powerful religious council of Jewish high spirits, lead by a cleric named Caiaphas. What Caiaphas had before him was the dilemma of condoning Christ for claiming he is the messiah, or ignoring him. These are the very day-to-day decision met by temptations that face political and social leaders of our time period. The powerful temptations sprung from a desire to please Caesar and the powerful, corrupt Roman Empire who were often weary of the Jews, should Christ be combined, no uprising would have the chance of occurring and Caiaphas would win favor with Rome and possibly become more politically influential. However, he abused the power he had as a religious leader by willfully choosing power over authority, not viewing Christ as harmful he acted as a poseur for his harsh punishment, even allowing Barabbas, a ravenous and crazed murder to be released so that Christ may be crucified.

Caiaphas, in his failure to not only stand firm the face of a potentially mocking Roman voice was the catalyst for putting him in Dante's *Inferno* as the worst hypocrite, being subjected to the taunting on by his peers, as he rapped on his own commitment to prudent as a cleric. King Herod’s vandalism toward authority comes in the face of his fervent capacity and love for a lavish, childish livelihood- he is seen giggling in a dimly lit parlor with luxurious tigers and other

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<sup>6</sup> Gilmour, Peter. "Text and context: The passion of the Christ and other Jesus films." ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials . Summer 2005. Accessed November 14, 2017. <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20#.VjFJHrerSM9> .

mammals flocking his stage while servants attended to his every need. Flocked by women whom he was portrayed as having sexual interest in, his focus is clearly on earthly means. Even the physical presence of how his adorned hair and eye makeup add to an effeminate characterization which the director could have gone to convey a lack of seriousness and willingness to sacrifice popularity for justice.

King Herod, having the opportunity to pardon Christ becomes visibly angered and asserts his desire to denote, showing no interest in any mechanism for aiding a suffering, unpopular man. The very values of petting and serving, even in monarchy seems nonexistent in Herod's grand vision for ruling. Christ continues, with a head down vigilant and steadfast about his being the Messiah, refusing to apologize for give into the political persecution who wanted his submission. Here, the divine unity with the human distinction of Christ, knowing his purpose he resists the very human temptations to back down from his ministry and appease the wealthy and powerful bodies. Human riches and power, a lifestyle that consistently bears blood and devastation does not even Christ's mind, for her is more concerned with teaching and serving as a living example of human relationship. His constant humility in speech (speaking slowly yet firmly) and even the costuming of the basic, luxurious garb he wore show a great contradiction of the powerful who seek to blend into and live by the materialist culture that is marketed to be the "solution"<sup>[6]</sup>. Pilate's struggle with this comes within a position for him to serve in the film of a great pondering, philosophical mind within a spiritual crisis. Though historians often state that Pilate was not a particularly vindictive or monumental factor in Christ's death the film does so, in a way that makes space for pondering. The pondering here to grapple with morality of something is predicated of the struggle to balance both faith and reason, being prepared to fall victim of power or conquer with authority.

The film shows an almost saintly advocacy of Christ by the wife of Pilate who had shown sympathy for the seemingly refreshing, convincing life of Christ. In the end the physical man becomes less erect in stature and duty, as he has become, in the end yet another pawn in the power dynamics of the Roman empire. The portrayal of the Crucifixion is ultimately wherein the film becomes most vulnerable in regard to criticism <sup>[7]</sup>. It was often described as overly violent and graphic in its portrayal and also bordering on anti-Semitic for posting the Jews in the Sanhedrin in an overly vindictive manner. Both criticism only prove a loss of experience or compatibility with human suffering or the compatibility with such. The Crucifixion, by nature is an act of torture that is meant to endure public humiliation, pain, and eventually death, therefore the need to properly show the punishment for standing one's ground to form a values system is indispensable. The intensity with which the Christ is whipped and nailed to the cross in a tremendous moment of suffering does not serve merely as a mourning time to remember that torture is gruesome, but to serve as an inspirational exhibition of the lengths one will go and should go for the defense of the truth<sup>7</sup>. The hope is not only there with the recursion but the notion of a long awaited victory comes in hand. The hero or saint of our generation may be faced with the martyrdom of themselves to safeguard reason and to refuse to die at the hands of lies <sup>[8]</sup>. Through the consistent *mise-en-scene* of a recently passionate God who resist political structures and dies by them for something greater, the essence of morality is born and realized.

Now that I have spent a significant portion discussing what distinguishes morally authoritative beings, I will engage with the permeating question one may be left with: "What adverse effects are there who use power instead of authority to establish their ways?" The answer to this is that their sense of control is often occurring from a sense of insecurity and though they

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald Madden. *The Passion of the Christ: A Modern Mystery Play*. Journal of Religion and Health, 2004,

may appear happy and successful with wealth and power, social alienation often results.

“Reverend” Powell is an example of this in the cinematic sense, when he becomes notably physically disheveled from his wild chase for John. When he feels his power threatened by a young boy he becomes neutered in a sense. The despot will use power to sabotage the authoritative voices within their accessible space because they have a realization that their legitimacy is being exposed as fraudulent. In a similar way, Caiaphas becomes an ardent target of Christ when he realizes that it would be beneficial to him in that it would maintain the trust between himself and Caesar. The feelings to which I referred earlier: humility and sacrifice are not performed and instead a manic, reactionary response is performed. However, failure to exercise humility and self sacrifice is something true of even the most pious of Christians- does that therefore make them prone to the power supplied by the aforementioned vandals? Not necessarily, for the isolation that many despotic rulers participate in actually deprives them from the moment of conversion that would be normal for someone who is fleeing from a dreaded or immoral behavior. In other words, it is through the help of others, in a fraternal or sororal manner that we are able to maintain our authority and prevent each other from openly living out the demons within us.

In both films, a motivation from community aided in the pursuit of moral authority. Whether it was Mary’s mourning and weeping at the foot of the Cross or the love John showed in sacrificial protection of his little sister, community can unite and share the burdens of the communal sacrifice. Communion is found within community and it is the very notion of such communities that the Gospels reference directly. In the Pauline Epistles, for example Paul establishes both a rapport and authority within communities not as a supervisor or punisher but

as a brother who holds people accountable for their actions<sup>8</sup>. Such commentary that maintains moral authority can be found outside of explicitly religious environments too. Take for example the notion of Alcoholics Anonymous wherein a community of people who are seeking conversion from a immoral abuse of alcohol are born anew through one another. In such a setting, one has a sponsor that mentors them through the hardships of receive and conceives in frequent meetings to speak truthfully and openly about the necessity to maintain sobriety. The opposite of this is the notion of the power-enthused who lacks authority, who may drink to excess, know that this is harmful, but yet not quit because it is too burdensome. Instead, they now isolate themselves from the people who tried to persuade them to quit, their brethren in salvation. Isolation leads to one becoming their own deity, in a way. However, what was amplified in each film was the overwhelming need of others and love for them that manifested itself in such sacrifice. When John experiences Pearl's vulnerability and suffers with her, he comes more engaged in going to lengths that may endanger his own safety to protect her. Similarly, when Christ proclaims "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" when he is being brutally killed on the cross, there is tremendous authority in the empathetic nature of community. For it is in such community that the love, which acts as catalyst for sacrifice is made known to be God. On the contrary, one who feels that they have conquered all of the emotions of being finds no significance in love for they have no love for themselves<sup>9</sup>. Through isolation communion becomes less suitable as God's presence is shut out by a reliance on individualism by means of conquering and defeating. For when it comes to the agency of being a legitimate

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<sup>8</sup> Mattison, William C., III. "Can Christians Possess the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?" *ATLA. Biblical Interpretation*, 2011. Web.

<sup>9</sup> Porter, Jean. " Divine commands, natural law, and the authority of God." *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials* . Summer 2014. Accessed November 14, 2017. <http://www.scethics.org/>.

moral authority, the requisite of being prepared to die fighting evil is needed as opposed to killing to sustain it.

Concluding, the fundamental question of authority as opposed to power is rooted in the key to authority: legitimacy. In order for a governed electorate or some other entity to recognize one as legitimate they need to merely feel as though they are of high morals standards and prioritize the governed, not the governors. However, in order for a leader to genuinely be legitimate they must endure in the act of humble sacrifice. Such as the political voyeurs who deceive people into thinking that they have virtue, but actually seek exploitation at the expense of their constituencies. Art has been a successful medium to display persuasion, truly utilizing the vastly diverse persona that the characters in our society perform in. Thus, through the critical analysis of both *The Night of the Hunter* and *The Passion of the Christ*, a genuine sense of a Judeo-Christian authority is gathered in a full spectrum of realness. This is done by the act of suffering and preparation for sacrifice, a unique martyrdom that, by love makes communion in service. Contrasted with the despotic power who vandalizes and merely spends to have legitimacy, who often reports of isolation. The sense of moral authority in the two films births the sacrificial sense of the characters who utilize their authority over those wielding power who wish to corrupt it.

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