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**G U A R D I A N**

**CONTENTS**

*The Ascension of Jesus Christ*

*By Leslie W. Sloat*

*The Hymnal and Doctrine*

*By Arthur W. Kuschke*

*Divine Guidance and Experience*

*By William H. McDowell*

*Mission Work on Formosa*

*A Report to the Assembly*

*Editorial — Christian Reformed Centennial*

## Maitland Congregation Loses in Southern Assembly

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. (Southern) had before it this year an appeal from a decision of the Synod of Florida, refusing to overturn an action of the Presbytery of St. Johns by which the minister and officers of the Maitland, Florida, Presbyterian Church had been summarily removed from their offices in the congregation. The Assembly refused to reverse the decision of the Synod, so that the original action of the Presbytery was allowed to stand. The Assembly refused also to give answer to a question of whether the congregation was still considered a member of the Southern Presbyterian denomination.

It is understood that the congregation has entered the civil courts in an effort to retain possession of its church property. It has already entered an application to be received as a particular church of the Orthodox Presbyterian denomination, and this application is scheduled for consideration at the May meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The pastor of the church, the Rev. Arthur Froelich, has appealed to the Florida Synod of the Southern Church against the action of the Presbytery in which he is located, in deposing him from the ministry. The background of all these matters is a protest on the part of the local church and its pastor against Modernism in the Southern Church, and certain summary actions of the Presbytery in which officers of the church were removed and at a later time the pastor deposed. The church has endeavored to secure satisfaction and justice from the denomination's courts before proceeding to enter the fellowship of another denomination.

## Silver Spring Church Has Work in Virginia

SEVERAL MEMBERS of Knox Church, Silver Spring, Md., who live in Virginia across from Washington, are meeting every other week on Tuesday evenings for a Bible study class conducted by the Rev. Charles H. Ellis. The group, which now meets in the home of one of the members in Vienna, Virginia, is studying the matter of securing a place where regular church services might be held.

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Pattern of Authority*, by Bernard Ramm, B.D., Ph.D. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957. 117p. \$1.50. (A Pathway Book)

DR. RAMM SETS OFF THE PATTERN of authority from "the abbreviated Protestant principle." The latter is expressed, he says, in Chillingworth's saying, "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." (p. 29) But Calvin "found his answer to the problem of religious authority in the *internal or secret witness of the Holy Spirit*" (p. 29). "In the matter of religious authority the Spirit and the Word are insolubly conjoined" (p. 29).

By thus speaking of a pattern rather than of "a single principle of authority" (p. 46) we may avoid, Ramm says, the charge of obscurantism. Reason is then given its rightful place. We then ask men to think of the claim that "God may have spoken" as a "genuine option" (p. 16). "Augustine did not desert reason, but he was pushed on by reason to see the true grounds of religious authority. His stand on authority was not a call for a sacrifice of his intellect; to the contrary, it was the *demand* of his intellect" (p. 20). Similarly Calvin employed "strong rational arguments for the divinity of the Scriptures" (p. 33). "Reason lays bare the grounds of authority" (p. 44).

Again, with the idea of the pattern of authority we do not make the Scriptures speak "as an authority in areas they did not intend to speak" (39). When therefore we ask men to submit to this pattern of authority, we seek no "infringement on the principle of freedom or personal liberty" (42). We do not deny to men "the right to test the truthfulness of various options" (42). We make no appeal to "sheer" authority (19). We only ask men to submit to "a Person—a Person absolutely reliable, absolutely true, and absolutely love" (26). And surely "All genuine scholarship circumscribes itself by the authority of truth" (42).

Here is authority "which combines the imperial majesty of God, the sovereign right of truth, and the dignity of man" (62).

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Ramm speaks of the "duality of the Word and Spirit" which "must always

be maintained, for it is in this *duality* that the Protestant and Christian principle of authority exists" (30). In this connection he refers with approval to Calvin, and to the Westminster, the Belgic and other Confessions. "Authority, and the personal or subjective reception of it, must not be confused, as they are in much of the literature of religious authority" (40). He refers with approval to Professor John Murray. In short, his aim is to advocate the historic Christian view of authority. According to this view the Scriptures are "antedecedently and objectively" authoritative. "In Calvin's view," says Warfield, "therefore the Scriptures are a documentation of God's special revelation of Himself unto Salvation" (*Calvin and Calvinism*, p. 67).

But to this objective revelation, documented in Scripture, there must be added a "subjective illumination wrought by the Holy Spirit" in the hearts of men if they are to receive the revelation (*Idem* p. 121).

There are therefore, according to Calvin as Warfield expounds him, two operations of the Holy Spirit. One of these relates to the work of prophets and apostles, through whom the "objective revelation" was to be brought to men. The other relates to those among the mass of sinful men, utterly powerless and unwilling of themselves to appropriate to themselves the objective revelation of grace in Christ presented in Scriptures, that they might have saving faith, true faith, sound faith. Those "whom God intends to unite in a more close and familiar contact with himself," "those to whom he determines to make his instructions effectual" the Spirit enables to accept the "objective revelation" given in Scripture (Warfield, p. 75. His quotations are from Calvin.)

Thus through the testimony of the Spirit "the Scriptures are accredited to us as the revelation of God." Without this testimony the Scriptures "lie before us inert and without effect on our minds, while with it they become not merely the power of God unto salvation, but also the vitalizing source of all our knowledge of God" (*Idem* p. 115).

Warfield says that Calvin's "doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit is the keystone of his doctrine of the knowledge of God" (p. 113). How important, then, to distinguish this

doctrine carefully from the "spurious revival" of this doctrine as it emanates from Schleiermacher (p. 124). For "sentences may be quoted from his writings which, when removed out of the context of his system of thought, almost give expression to it" (124). Unfortunately Ramm quotes such sentences, not, to be sure, from Schleiermacher, but from such men as Herbert H. Farmer (Cf. *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. I, and *The Westminster Confession of Faith after 300 Years*), John Newton Thomas (*Theology Today*, Vol. 3, pp. 159 ff.), and G. W. Bromiley (Cf. *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, pp. 127ff.), and others, for whom no less than for Schleiermacher revelation is not complete in any objective form until men have accepted it.

## Divine Guidance

(Continued from page 71)

or contradict the authority of this doctrine, to the mind of its exponents, is only to manifest gross alienation from the life of God and the ways of the Holy Spirit. The circle is thus complete: there is in this phenomenon a strong tendency to sectarianism, in which persons are schismatically drawn together by mutual submission to the discipline of one simple doctrine. This is an alien thing to the Church of Jesus Christ. Worse, the doctrine involved is a very bold, because very practical, attack upon the very foundations of the Christian faith, though it is probably not intended as such by its adherents. Christianity is, to be sure, a religion of authority, as we have already observed, but certainly not the authority of any "inner voice" or any human voice. Christianity is a religion of the authority of the only living God, speaking solely in His written Word. Surely it is but a poor and slavish imitation of the Christian faith which will rob God of His unique authority over men's consciences and grant any measure of that authority to the fancies of the inner workings of the mind of a human, or groups of humans, or of angels for that matter.

If the doctrine of guidance had any validity, the words of Revelation 22:18 would have been gratuitous. II Timothy 3:16 also has some bearing on this matter. At the time Paul wrote the

Why should those who, like Ramm, hold to the view of the testimony of the Holy Spirit similar to that of Calvin, seek to avoid the charge of obscurantism from the followers of Schleiermacher, for whom the Holy Spirit and His work result from the power of development which resides in human nature itself? (Cf. *The Christian Faith*, p. 63). From the point of view of the followers of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, or Barth, there will always be "infringement on the principle of freedom or personal liberty," so long as one holds to an infallibly inspired Bible. The "sovereignty of Christology" as they hold it demands the rejection of the views on the principle of authority as held by the Reformers.

C. VAN TIL

words, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable . . ." it is quite likely that the special charismatic gifts of prophesy, healing, and tongues were still in existence in the church. Scripture was not the only profitable revelation. Why did Paul not mention these other profitable modes? We suggest that it was because these gifts were temporary instruments whereas canonical Scripture alone was the only permanent special revelation. Some observant objector may cite I Corinthians 12 and 14 to show that Paul did advocate resort to these gifts. But the apostle made it clear in the course of this discussion (I Cor. 13:8) that these gifts were transitory. Now if the spiritual gift of prophecy persists in our day as then, why not those of tongues and healing? So far as is known to this writer, none of the parties to our dilemma are Pentecostals, but if these passages are cited in proof of the continuance of some form of revelation, it should be seen that the doctrine receives no more support than the Pentecostalist doctrine of tongues, since Paul clearly shows the Corinthians that these gifts are not shared by all members of the Church (I Cor. 12:29, 30). But it is precisely the contention of those who claim that God is still revealing His will at the practical level that all Christians ought to receive these revelations. Indeed, not to receive them is proof of unconfessed sin, so it is alleged.

There were other than reasons of

general safeguard for the inclusion of texts such as Revelation 22:18 regarding the finality of Scripture, and II Timothy 3:16, in the canon. Among the great struggles of the apostolic church was its conflict with Gnosticism. This was a pre-Christian movement of an ultra-mystical and dualistic order (derived from the Greek "gnosis" meaning knowledge, in this instance, spiritual). This movement seemed to continually threaten the overthrow of the Church by infiltrations and attacks from within. For reasons unknown to us, possibly the simple need to "belong" to something, its followers were determined to fasten themselves upon the Church. So zealous were these Gnostics to this end that they were willing to go along with orthodox Christianity to the extent of paying great lip-service to the Scriptures, although they much disliked the Old Testament. They regarded the Old Testament as a less spiritual production, according to their scheme of dualism between spirit and matter, in which matter was regarded as essentially evil, and the Old Testament was regarded as "physical." The divisive character of this sect is marked particularly in its insistence that its adherents, especially their leaders, who alone were "spiritual" men, had immediate revelations from God for which absolute authority was claimed. The New Testament writers allude frequently to these heresies—"oppositions of knowledge (science) falsely so-called" (I Tim. 6:20). It is not difficult to see that, in essence, this internal attack upon the Church's unique position, under whatever name the attack is made, has never really ceased. The Church, however orthodox, must never slacken its defenses against those notions which, in the practical sphere as well as the doctrinal, exalt themselves against God's unique authority in the Scriptures.

### Reason for the Problem

This writer is persuaded that this problem of revelation as it exists for some people, arises from a natural desire for a closer, even face-to-face fellowship with God. Paul takes cognizance of this desire in II Corinthians 5:8 — "willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." Yet Paul reminds us that we are not to be so completely dominated by this worthy consideration in our earthly pilgrimage as to lose