

Terms of Communion and the Six Terms.

(The Scriptures are the First Term of Communion)

1. An acknowledgment of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice.—*Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.*

Question.—*What are we acknowledging when we acknowledge the Old and New Testament to be the word of God?*

Answer.—The *first* thing that we acknowledge is that, contrary to the Anabaptists, the Old Testament continues as a rule of faith and practice for Christians, as Paul teaches, Acts 26:22.

Although the Old Testament contains this rule, many times, under a ministry of types and shadows, Heb. 9:9, 10; yet, these Scriptures are given by the inspiration of God for the growth and profit of the people of God, 2 Tim. 3:16. It was the purpose of these ceremonies to lead that church to Christ, Gal. 3:23. Therefore, we conclude there is one and the same doctrine and gospel common throughout all ages of the church, Luke 24:27. The failure of the Pharisees to perceive Christ under these types and shadows is made out to be a great fault in them, John 5:39, 40.

In owning this Old Testament, we are professing that the church of God is one from the beginning of the world until the end of time, Acts 7:38; Rev. 12:14. Even those ceremonies, which were instituted to be practiced only for a period of time, are applicable to us under the New Testament, Col. 2:16, 17.

There is also a recognition that the church of the New Testament is built upon the foundation of those revelations inscripturated in the Old Testament, Eph. 2:20. For this reason, we are required to follow the faith and practice of Old Testament saints, Heb. 6:12.

Again, there is an acknowledging that, as Christ and the apostles demonstrated, all New Testament doctrine is substantiated by means of the Old Testament, Rom. 15:4. The New Testament teaching finds its grounding in the Old Testament Scriptures, Luke 16:29; 2 Pet. 1:19.

The *second* thing that we acknowledge is that, contrary to the Jews, the New Testament holds forth that revelation of the grace of God in Christ more clearly than was held forth under the Old Testament revelation alone, Heb. 1:1-4. This accounts for much of the language which some misinterpret to the disavowing of the Old Testament, Luke 16:16. The New Testament revelation corresponds to that better administration of the covenant of grace which characterizes the church since the coming of Christ, Heb. 8:13. It also represents the inscripturating of that revelation promised to the apostles giving full proof of the sending of the Spirit, John 14:26.

The *third* thing that we acknowledge is that, contrary to the Papists, that the word of God is not to be found in unwritten traditions but in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, 2 Pet. 1:21; 3:15, 16; 2 Tim. 3:16. The affirmation that these words are the very words of God is asserted by the apostolic witness, 1 Cor. 2:13. This affirmation is merely a confirmation of that promise Jesus made to them, Matt. 10:20. Furthermore, the fact that these words are the very words of God explains why they shall remain, Matt. 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:23.

Question.—*What necessitates an acknowledging that these Scriptures are the alone infallible rule of faith and practice?*

Answer.—This acknowledgement is necessary for several reasons:

First, the Papists and Anabaptists deny the sufficiency of this revelation for matters of faith and practice, contrary to the express statements of the Scriptures, Ps. 19:7, 8. Yet, we are assured they contain all that is necessary for communicating of wisdom to the believer, 2 Tim. 3:15-17. They are the very means by which the people of God are made holy, John 17:17; 2 Thess. 2:13. In them alone, we find all that is necessary to eternal life, John 20:30, 31.

It belongs to the sufficiency of Scripture to declare all necessary articles of faith and practice, Prov. 30:5, 6. Only that which is the word of God can produce faith in the hearer, Rom. 10:17; which is necessary to all right belief and action, Rom. 14:23. This is why every addition to them is forbidden, Deut. 4:2.

Second, the enemies of revelation deny that these Scriptures are an infallible rule, John 10:35. Infallibility is a quality denoting something which is proved and certain, even something which is a demonstration, Acts 1:3. Declaring the Scriptures infallible is to declare that they are incapable of erring, either as to words or the doctrine taught, because they are the very words of God, Isa. 1:20. They do not contain the words which flow from the wisdom of man, but those which are given by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:4.

Third, while, on the one hand, the Papists deny this infallible rule of faith and practice to be the *alone infallible* rule of faith and practice, adding to it their own papal decrees, Matt. 15:9; on the other hand, the Arminians, and other anti-creedalists, wish to assert that the Scriptures are the *only* rule of faith and practice needed or admissible, 2 Pet. 1:20. Scriptures are the *alone infallible* rule whereby we may establish any article of faith or practice conducive to those good works commanded in the Bible, 1 Tim. 4:1-7. Yet, we cannot acknowledge that they are the *only* rule because it belongs to the church to form creeds and confessions, 2 Tim. 1:13; and to make rules regarding the order of the church is not denied by this formula, 1 Cor. 14:40. The Scriptures *alone* are the deciding norm, (*norma normans* or *norma decisionis*), determining which doctrine is true, Deut. 12:32. However, the confessions of the church must provide a distinguishing norm, (*norma normata* or *norma discretionis*), whereby the true doctrine is distinguished from the false, Matt. 16:19.