

Terms of Communion and the Six Terms.

(The Correct Sense of the Scriptures Must be the Second Term of Communion)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading. (Neh. 8:8)

Question. — *Why is it necessary that the correct sense of the Scriptures constitutes our second term of communion?*

Answer. — Just as the first term of communion separates the people of God from the pagans, Rom. 3:1-3; so, too, the second term of communion must seek to distinguish those who are orthodox from those who are erroneous and heretical, 1 Tim. 6:21; 1 Cor. 11:18, 19.

Although we confess that the Scriptures are possessed of a perspicuity, especially with respect to those matters concerning the salvation of man and the glory of God (*cf.* Ps. 119:105), which none can deny but those devoid of faith, 1 Cor. 2:14-16; yet, such is the effect of sin that the mind of man has been spiritually darkened and unable to comprehend that which should be clear, Eph. 4:18. Such is our dullness that we stand in need of some to teach and instruct in that way which should be clear, Acts 8:30, 31.

Such is the nature of all written communication that it contains both the words and the intention of the writer, 1 Pet. 1:10-12; which in the Scriptures is raised to a height far above that of mere men, 2 Pet. 1:20, 21. The sense of the Scriptures is that of the Spirit and not of the mere letter, 2 Cor. 3:6.

The sense of the Scriptures is that which the unstable and unlearned wrest, or twist, to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3:16; when they do not interpret according to the proportion, or analogy, of faith, Rom. 12:6. This is that which Nehemiah sought to give in the hearing of the people of God in his day, Neh. 8:1-8. This is the concern of Jesus when he taught in the synagogues, Luke 4:15-22. This is also the concern of the apostle on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:16.

Men must not only have access to the Scriptures, but they must be able to understand the meaning of the words in order to be saved, Matt. 13:19. To this end, Paul wished rather to speak five words with understanding than ten thousand without, 1 Cor. 14:19.

Question. — *What are the best ways of transmitting and teaching the genuine sense of the Scriptures?*

Answer. — The genuine sense of the Scriptures is best transmitted via the use of creeds and confessions of faith, which set forth a form (ὑποτύπωσιν) of sound words, 2 Tim. 1:13. These forms are best suited for the transmission of the faith from generation to generation, 2 Tim. 2:2.

The genuine sense of the Scriptures is best taught through a system of catechizing, whereby men are instructed in the sense of the true religion, Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; Gal. 6:6. Hence, catechization in its most general and

comprehensive sense, means the first brief and elementary instruction which is given by word of mouth in relation to the rudiments of any particular doctrine; but, as used by the church, it signifies a system of instruction relating to the first principles of the Christian religion, designed for the ignorant and unlearned, Heb. 6:1-3. When Paul forbids a novice (νεόφωτον) to be a teacher, he is referring to one who is yet a catechumen, 1 Tim. 3:6. An equivalent term (ἄπειρος, meaning inexperienced) is used to describe those who are babes in the faith, Heb. 5:13.

It is in this form of sound words and system of catechizing that heresies and heretics are to be excluded from the consideration of the orthodox faith, Gal. 5:20; Tit. 3:10.

Question. – *What are some of the reasons that the church has found it necessary and desirable to frame confessions and catechisms?*

Answer. – The church has historically found it necessary to frame confessions and creeds in order to set forth the orthodox sense of the Christian faith from time to time. The church is biblically authorized to prepare standards as well as being historically justified for doing so, for it is to be a pillar of the truth, 1 Tim. 3:15.

These creeds and catechisms do several things for the church:

First, they bear *testimony* to the world, especially in controverted points in circulation amongst professing groups of believers, or about the believing group itself, as to the truths professed and held forth in Scripture in point of orthodoxy and purity, Ps. 60:4.

Second, they furnish a *compendium* of what the church believes, especially in view of the fact that heretics usually appeal to this or that text to make a plausible claim of truth, Ps. 56:5; Jude 4. This compendium ought to contain the truth according to that analogy of faith which displays the harmonious relationship which exists between the different truths of Christianity, Phil. 3:15.

Third, they are prepared to *distinguish* between the faithful churches and those less faithful, or heterodox, Isa. 59:19.

Fourth, they serve to establish and maintain *unity of doctrine* within the churches of God, 1 Cor. 1:10. They provide a template for the commanded like-mindedness required within the church, Rom. 15:5, 6. Furthermore, they mark the limits which ministers and others of a particular church are to respect in their teachings, Rom. 16:17, 18.

Fifth, they are a compact and transmittable form of that essential doctrine held by one generation that may be *handed down* to another through these confessional writings, Ps. 145:4. It is the responsibility of the elder generation to instill in the younger generation that form of sound words, that they might praise God aright, Ps. 78:4-7; Isa. 38:19; Joel 1:3. It is the duty of the younger generation to mark and heed those things which are according to the true and genuine sense of the Scriptures, Ps. 44:1; 78:3.