

## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### CHAPTER 1.-Of the Holy Scripture.

IX. The infallible Rule of Interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture it selfe: and therefore, when there is a Question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.<sup>1</sup>

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Question 1—*When there is a question about the true meaning, and full sense of any Scripture, must it be known and searched, by other places, which speak more clearly?*

*Answer*—Yes. 2 Pet. 1:20; Acts 15:15, 16. Thus they do err, who maintain the Scriptures not to be a sufficient Interpreter of itself. Because, 1.) the noble Bereans, compared Scripture with Scripture, for finding out the true and sure sense of it, Acts 17:11. 2.) The apostle Paul did the same, Acts 28:23. 3.) The same was done by the council of the apostles and elders, Acts 15:15-17.

Question 2—*Do the Scriptures have a manifold sense, or is the interpretation one?*

*Answer*—In order to facilitate the pope's placement upon the seat of judgment, Roman Catholicism maintains that one and the same text can have a fourfold meaning. First, there is the *literal* meaning which, incidentally, is the only meaning that we acknowledge to be decisive, especially in matters of religious controversy. Secondly, there is the *allegorical* or figurative meaning, when matters of a temporal and physical nature symbolize those of a spiritual dimension, as in Galatians 4:24 where Hagar and Sarah are expressive of two covenants. Such is also the case when something from the realm of nature is used to instruct and motivate man to fulfil his obligation. This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 9:9, where it is stated, "Doth God take care for oxen?", by which the congregation is exhorted to care for their ministers. Thirdly, there is an *analogical* or mystical meaning, such as when heaven is depicted by means of earthly objects. This is the case in Revelation 21:2 when "Jerusalem" refers to heaven. Fourthly, there is a *tropological* meaning which is established by an exchange of words, something which is resorted to when application is made to our daily walk or for the purpose of amending it.

The orthodox believe that only one true and genuine sense belongs to the Scriptures. That sense may be twofold: either simple or compound. Simple and historical is that which contains the declaration of one thing without any other signification; as the precepts, the doctrines and the histories, *cf.* 1 Tim. 1:9. And this again is twofold, either proper and grammatical or figurative and tropical (*i.e.*, metaphorical); proper, arising from the proper words; tropical, from figurative words. The composite, or compound, sense is in prophecies as types, part of which is in the type, part in the antitype, Rom. 15:8-12. This does not establish two senses, but two parts of one and the same sense intended by the Holy Spirit, who with the letter considers the mystery, as in that prophecy, "ye shall not break a bone thereof," Ex. 12:46. The full sense is not obtained unless the truth of the type or paschal lamb is joined with the truth of the antitype or Christ, *cf.* John. 19:36.

Question 3—*How is it evident that the Scriptures have only one sense?*

*Answer*—The unity of the Scriptures is made clear: 1.) From the unity of the truth—

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16.

because truth is only one and simple and therefore cannot admit many senses without becoming uncertain and ambiguous, John 10:35. 2.) From the unity of form—because there is only one essential form of any one thing (the sense is the form of the Scriptures), Rom. 4:3. 3.) From the perspicuity of the Scriptures, which cannot allow various foreign and diverse senses, Luke 16:29. We must distinguish the sense of the Scriptures from their application—the sense is one; but the application is diverse, both for instruction, reproof, correction, *etc.*, 2 Tim. 3:16.

Question 4—*Do we need interpretation to ascertain the true sense of the Scriptures?*

*Answer*—Yes. Acts 8:30, 31. Thus do certain Anabaptists, Quakers and others err who disavow the need for interpretation to ascertain the true sense of Scripture. This is true not only of the words which are contained in versions, but also of the things (called “prophecy” by Paul; Rom. 12:6; and by Peter; 2 Pet. 1:20). It is not to be sought by each man's private judgment (which is condemned by Peter), but is to be gathered from the Scriptures themselves as their own best and surest interpreter, Neh. 8:8; Acts 17:11. This is done by three means: analysis, comparison and analogy. Analysis is threefold: grammatical, which inquires into proper expressions; rhetorical, which inquires into the figurative; and logical, which observes scope and circumstances and attends the connection of words. Comparison compares passages of Scripture with each other, Acts 9:22—the more obscure with the plainer, similar and parallel with similar, dissimilar with dissimilar. The analogy of faith, Rom. 12:6, signifies not only the measure of faith granted to each believer, but also to the constant harmony and agreement of all heads of faith exhibited in the clearer expressions of Scripture (to which all expositions ought to be conformed) that nothing may be determined at variance with articles of faith or the precepts of the Decalogue.