

Terms of Communion and the Six Terms.

(The Correct Sense of the Scriptures is the Second Term of Communion)

2. That the whole doctrine of the *Westminster* Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, are agreeable unto, and founded upon, the Scriptures.—*Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.*

Question.—*What do we mean by the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms?*

Answer.—By the whole doctrine, we mean the fullness of the teaching, or interpretation, of the Scriptures held forth in the Confession and Catechisms, John 10:35. We are acknowledging that there is a consistency of teaching to be found throughout the Scriptures that is able to be transmitted accordingly, Rom. 12:6.

That there is a doctrine, or interpretive teaching, held forth in the Scriptures is clear in several passages considered in the original, because it is not merely the possession of the Scriptures, but holding them in their correct interpretation, which forms the greatest privilege of the true people of God, (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ), Rom. 3:2. This represents a body of teaching received with the giving of the law, (λόγια ζῶντα), Acts 7:38. The doctrines, which form the catechesis of the church, compose a distinct body of interpretive teaching, (τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ), Heb. 5:12; and these teachings are distinctly Christian, (τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον), Heb. 6:1. It is the duty of those who teach to do so according to this interpretive body of teaching, or doctrine, (εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ), 1 Pet. 4:11. It is this interpretive teaching, or doctrine, (*logia*), which forms the confession (ὁμολογουμένως, *homologia*) of the church, 1 Tim. 3:16.

The Confession and Catechisms make several things clear about the church:

First, that it is an *orthodox* church, 2 Thess. 3:6. There is an emphasis upon the great overarching truths of the Christian faith, the Trinity, Matt. 28:19; 1 John 5:7, 8; and, the Person and Deity of Jesus Christ, Matt. 16:16; Heb. 1:3.

It holds to the catholic truths received in the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer, Acts 2:42.

Second, that it is a *Protestant* church, Jer. 11:7. It is a church that has been brought forth from spiritual Babylon, Rev. 18:4; rejecting the papal Antichrist, 2 Thess. 2:3, 4. It is also a church which asserts the truth of justification by faith alone, Gal. 3:11. It is a church which proclaims that salvation is only of the LORD, Jonah 2:9.

Third, it is a *Reformed* church, (διορθώσεως), Heb. 9:10. This means that it is a church which studies to be reformed in doctrine, 1 Tim. 6:3; worship, Matt. 15:9; discipline, 2 Thess. 3:14; and, practice, 1 Pet. 2:21.

In *doctrine*, there is an assertion of the sovereignty and eternal predestination of God, Eph. 1:11; and the eternal election of some to salvation, Rom. 9:11.

In *worship*, there is a care to see that nothing is brought into the worship of God apart from His command, Col. 2:23; John 4:24.

In *discipline*, holding to the right and lawful decrees of lawful synods and councils, Acts 15:2, 4.

In *practice*, embracing the binding validity of the moral law of God in its fullness, 1 John 2:3, 4.

Question. — *What do we intend by acknowledging that this doctrine is agreeable unto the Scriptures?*

Answer. — The acknowledging that this whole doctrine is agreeable to the Scriptures is an acknowledgment that this doctrine is formally consenting to Scripture, 2 Tim. 1:13. This was the concern of the synod of Jerusalem, in establishing its decree, Acts 15:15. This agreeableness is characterized by an inherent doctrinal health, (ὁγιανοῦση διδασκαλία), Tit. 2:1.

The church is warned of those who will not endure this sound doctrine, 2 Tim. 4:3. Yet, this sound doctrine, or teaching, is so joined to the name of God that the rejection of sound doctrine is rejecting the name of God, 1 Tim. 6:1. Sound doctrine is that which agrees with the Word of God, John 7:16, 17. In the agreeableness to the Scriptures, the soundness of the whole doctrine is acknowledged, whereby the authority of God is held forth to men, Mark 1:22.

The doctrine, or teaching, that is not according to the Word of God is not agreeable and, therefore, not healthful doctrine which is to be rejected, 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 John 9, 10. However, all sound doctrinal interpretation conforms to the original pattern of sound words, 2 Pet. 1:20, 21.

Question. — *What do we mean when we acknowledge that this whole doctrine is founded upon the Scriptures?*

Answer. — The acknowledging of the whole doctrine to be founded upon the Scriptures is an acknowledging of the utter dependence of all sound doctrine upon the very words of God in Scripture, 2 Tim. 3:15-17. The correct sense, or sound interpretation, of the Scriptures must be rooted in and built upon the Scriptures themselves, Matt. 22:29, 31.

The Scriptures provide the foundation of the confession which constitutes the church itself, Eph. 2:20. This is because in and through the Scriptures the Holy Ghost speaks, Acts 28:25; and, therefore, all teaching founded upon and conformed to it is a demonstration of that same Spirit, Luke 4:32.

The contrast is with those doctrines not founded upon the Scriptures but are founded upon the commandments, or words, of men, Matt. 16:12. These doctrines are strange, Heb. 13:9; and they are compared to wind, Eph. 4:14. Whereas, those doctrines which are founded upon the Scriptures are designated the doctrine of the Lord, Acts 13:12.