

others coming after us may also reach that destination, perhaps by an even straighter and smoother passage than ours.

On the role of reason in doctrinal formulation in general, I would like to propose seven principles for your consideration.

(1) Revelation is, first of all, addressed to the human mind, to the rational faculty. Unless the content of revelation can be rationally known (at least partially), it is of no value as far as communication of truth is concerned.

(2) Faith, as response to revelation, involves knowledge, conviction, and trust. Faith always has a rational object, which is truth about some person, thing, or event. Without at least partial knowledge of truth, faith cannot be exercised.

(3) Faith in a complete "mystery" is a contradiction in terms. To be believed, truth must be known, at least partially.

(4) The rational faculty of the regenerate person is able to receive the truths communicated by the Spirit of God in Scripture and to know them.

(5) Some of the truths of Scripture are clear and easy to understand; some others are difficult for our sin-darkened minds to clearly grasp, and need study and sound thinking before they can become intelligible. Some teachings lie along the surface and can be read and grasped as one runs; others lie deeply embedded in the rock and need to be dug out painstakingly with great care and skill and patience by one who will sit down and work at the task. In the midst of this laborious process sometimes even doctrines thought to be great mysteries will open to the understanding and yield to a better formulation, and will then be seen as having required only some key idea or insight to unlock their beauty and utility.

(6) Safeguards against prying into what appear to be impenetrable mysteries include fervent prayer, careful study, fruitful contact with previous work in the relevant area(s), submission of ideas and proposals to the judgment of godly and competent persons, reflection over a period of time, and smooth integration