

of new concepts with knowledge previously acquired. When internal resolution of logical difficulties and/or external "fit" with all known data cannot be achieved, proposals for penetrability of mysteries should not be abandoned, but temporarily laid on the shelf, to be worked on at some future time.

(7) Whenever a doctrine continues to resist further rational penetration, it should be remembered that mystery is an appropriate category in doctrinal formulation, and that the incomprehensibility of God applies in every area of revealed truth. However, I would urge that the category of mystery be invoked, not at the beginning of an investigation, but as near the end as possible!

Incidentally, this is not intended as a complete set of guiding principles for the role of reason in doctrinal formulation; it contains only a few relevant concepts. And I do not expect that every believer will be involved in the process of development of difficult doctrines--that is the burden of only some-- but I do expect that every believer will wish to understand the teachings of Scripture as fully and as deeply as possible, especially in the case of doctrines that are fraught with intellectual difficulties that cry out for resolution.

Edward Bickersteth, toward the end of his treatise on the Trinity, expresses this balanced emphasis nicely. He writes:

But, do you ask, is it needful for every believer to pass through such a long process of proof as even this little treatise sets forth? Assuredly not. The Bible is eminently the poor man's book. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. And to such a childlike mind a very few simple truths generally carry conviction, and with conviction life and peace. "I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "I will send the Comforter to you." His Father, his Redeemer, his Sanctifier, are equally indispensable to him: and he knows that he was baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He needs no more. Without any laboured syllogisms, he believes these Three are One. The truths find him. He does not expect to fathom the mystery; but his whole heart embraces that which satisfied his whole necessity.

If, however, doubts and suspicions assail these first principles when implanted, or keep back an inquirer from believing them, then the word of God, reverently consulted, affords a complete answer to every, what I may call,