

may not be thankful for them, a lot of creeds would never have been written without them. And many a Bible teacher would not really know how to articulate personal beliefs adequately...if some one had not told him that he did not know how to do it at all...told him that at some time, that is.

5. Establishing Doctrinal Statements

In our analysis there are basically six steps in the setting of a doctrine into statement form. These may be altered or reinterpreted, no doubt, but they seem to be the most important as far as this discussion goes. They are not so much a matter of law as a matter of understanding and appreciation for the factors that generate formal concepts.

a. Historical Setting

A situation must exist in which minds are allowed to form ideas of value. The occasion for discussion arises in such a setting and the breadth of the setting determines very much the adequacy of the formulation.

b. Challenge

There must be something to stimulate thinking in the areas where the statement will later have its reflection. The challenge that does the most good must come from within the community or at least within its professed sphere. Extra-community challenges are more likely to be overlooked or give cursory treatments. Challenge within the body will serve as a threat to its continued existence and strong efforts must be set to meet it. External threats are often disregarded as foolishness and never really answered.

c. Study

In the case of a doctrine, a renewed study of the Scriptures in the light of the challenge is the hopeful process. Studies grow from challenges and although you may have a study without one, it is more likely to have a fruitful study with one. The study may be comprised by a group of by less coordinated individuals but it is characterized as a search of the basic materials for discovering the best response to the challenge.

d. Finding

The study must be "reported out" so to speak, in some proclamation or finding. The finding may often be schismatic in the community and will usually produce at least two lines of teaching in the church: those who agree with the finding and those who don't.