

Christianity in Episcopal Tints

3. The Church's Teaching and the Bible



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Episcopal Church • White Bear Lake, Minnesota

Amazing Love

Christianity in Episcopal Tints

Introduction

- n Where did the Episcopal Church come from?
- n What does it believe?
- n How does it worship and why?
- n How does it understand the Bible and God?
- n How does it reach out to the rest of the world?
- n In this broken world – where the followers of Jesus are fractured into many denominations – what positive role does the Episcopal Church play?

Christianity in Episcopal Tints

Introduction

- n **1:** Our History
- n **2:** Our Worship
- n **3:** The Church's Teaching and the Bible
- n **4:** Spirituality
- n **5:** Ministry and Organization. The Church's Mission.
- n PowerPoint presentations and PDF's of the PowerPoint can be downloaded from www.StJohnAdultEd.org

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

For the Mission of the Church,
Book of Common Prayer, p. 816-817

What is Theology?



God Talk

n God is:

n personal

n the Creator

n holy, unknowable, infinite

n the Alpha and the Omega

n the “I AM who I AM”

God Talk

- n Worship is our reverent response to the personal, holy, unknowable, infinite God
- n The world theology comes from two Greek words:
 - n *theos* (God)
 - n *logos* (word)
- n literally: theology is “God Talk.”

Language of God Talk

- n Language of Theology = The Language of “God Talk”
- n How can we talk about God when our language is based on things in the created world?

Principle of Analogy

- n The language of “God Talk” often uses the **Principle of Analogy**
 - n The world is an expression of the being of God. Thus there is a “continuity” between God and the world.
 - n Entities of the created world can be used as “analogies” for God because the creation is an expression of God’s being.

Example of the Principle of Analogy

- n God is our Father = God is like a human father. God is analogous to a father
- n *similarities:*
 - n the source of our existence,
 - n exercises authority over us, and
 - n cares for us.
- n *dissimilarities:*
 - n not human,
 - n not male, and
 - n not married to our mother.

Principle of Analogy

- n At times, the dissimilarities of the analogy are very strong, in which case we call it a **metaphor**.
- n Examples:
 - n “God is a lion.”
 - n “God is light.”

Sources of Theology



Sources of Theology

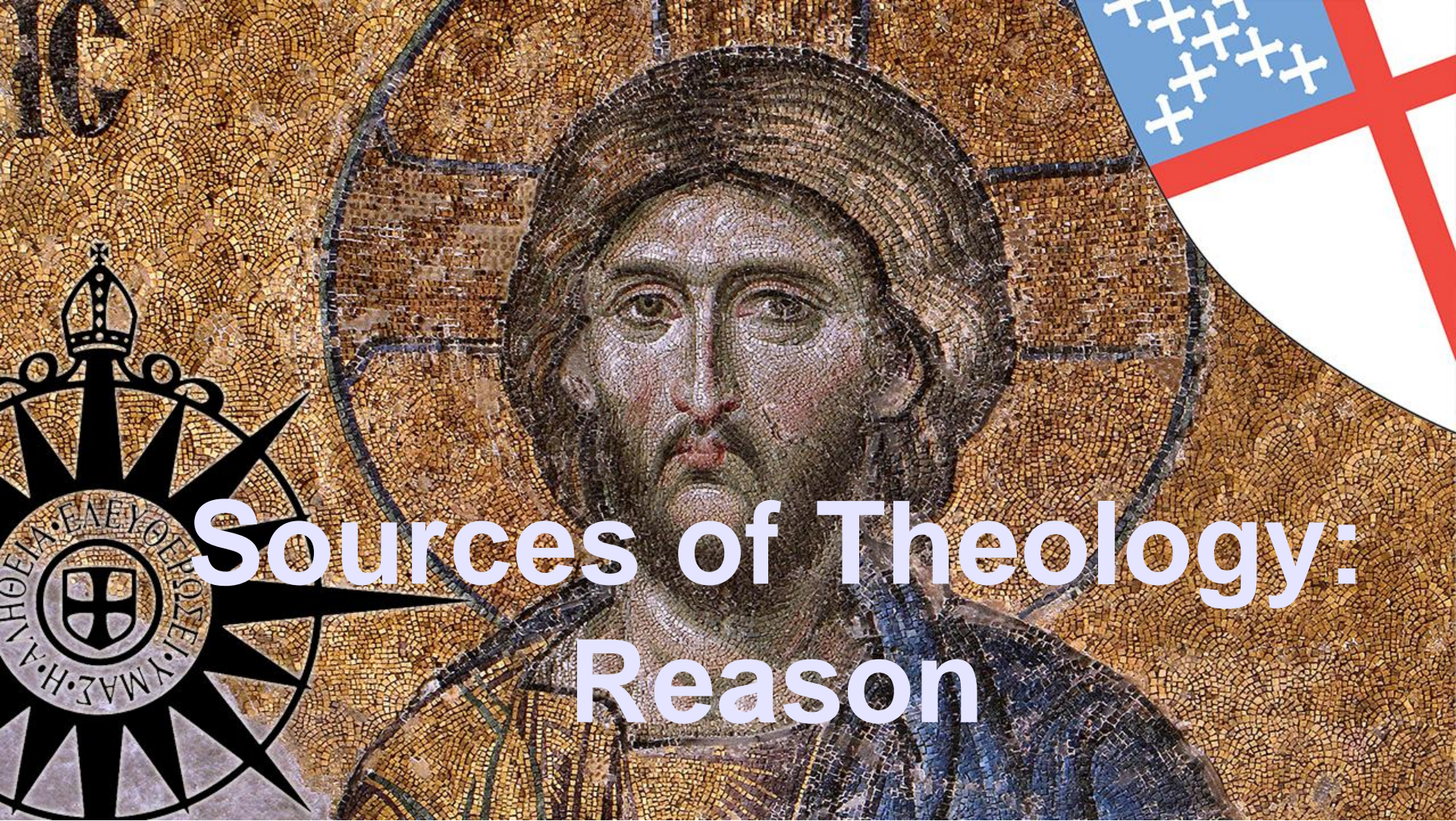
n **The Three-Legged Stool**

n Richard Hooker described a “**Three Legged Stool**” as the sources for Anglican theology:

n 1. **Scripture** = the **Bible**.

n 2. **Tradition**.

n 3. **Reason**.



Sources of Theology: Reason

Definition of Reason

- n **reason**: the power of the human mind to discern truth and beauty.
- n *includes*:
 - n “critical” reasoning (elucidate revelations, correct alleged revelations).
 - n “intuitive” reasoning (involving imagination, esthetic sensibility).

Basis of the Authority of Reason

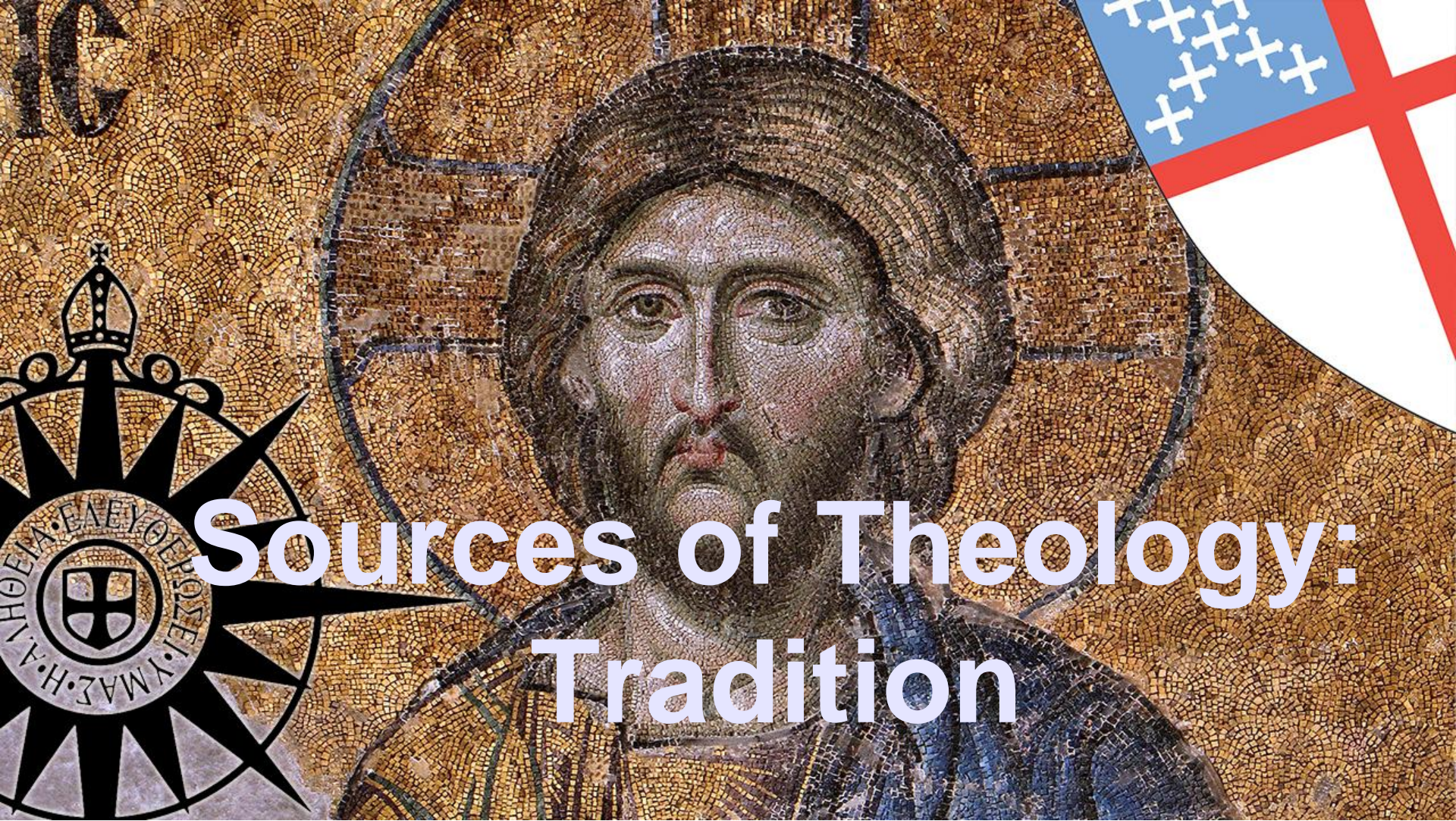
- n from Richard Hooker, 17th century:
 - n The cosmos is an “unfolding” of the mind of God in a hierarchy of orders and structures.
 - n All of creation thus “participates” to a degree in the “mind” of God.
 - n Therefore a “seed” of the reason of God is present in the minds of human beings.

Basis of the Authority of Reason

- n A modern view of reason , from John Polkinghorne speaking on the laws of physics:
- n “there is some deep-seated relationship between the reason within (the rationality of our minds -- in this case mathematics) and the reason without (the rationale order and structure of the physical world around us). The two fit together like a glove.”
- n “the universe, in its rationale beauty and transparency, looks like a world shot through with signs of mind, and maybe, it’s the ‘capital M’ Mind of God we are seeing.”

Summary: Reason as a Source of Theology

- n The exercise of our reason can draw us to knowledge of God because the rationality of our minds, our esthetic sense of beauty and goodness are *reflections* of the *mind of God*.



Sources of Theology: Tradition

Definition of Tradition

n **tradition**: the ongoing reflection of the people of God on their experience of God, transmitted from one generation to the another.

Examples of Tradition

- n Examples of **tradition** include:
 - n The Creeds,
 - n The decisions of the Church Councils,
 - n The religious writings through history: Systemic Theologies, Commentaries, Devotional works.

Approaches to Tradition

- n There are three possible “approaches” to **tradition**:
- n 1. **Single Source** (the Anglican Approach): traditions are reflections *based on, rooted in* the Scriptures
- n 2. **Dual-Source** (Roman Catholic Approach from the Council of Trent to Vatican II): a source of revelation *independent* of the Scriptures
- n 3. **Total Rejection** (Anabaptist, Puritan Approach): each individual should interpret Scripture *independent of the past*.

Articles of Religion

- n For The Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., **traditions** (rooted in the Scriptures) are spelled out in the **Articles of Religion**, also known as the **Thirty-Nine Articles**:
 - n Adopted by General Convention 1801 and made part of the American Prayer Book.
 - n Bible first and prior to all tradition (Articles 6, 8, 20, 22).
 - n Affirms Apostles and Nicene Creed (Article 8).
 - n Not a confession of faith like Lutheran Book of Concord or Reformed Westminster Confession; intended as a non-binding guide.
 - n Has allowed great theological freedom in Anglicanism.

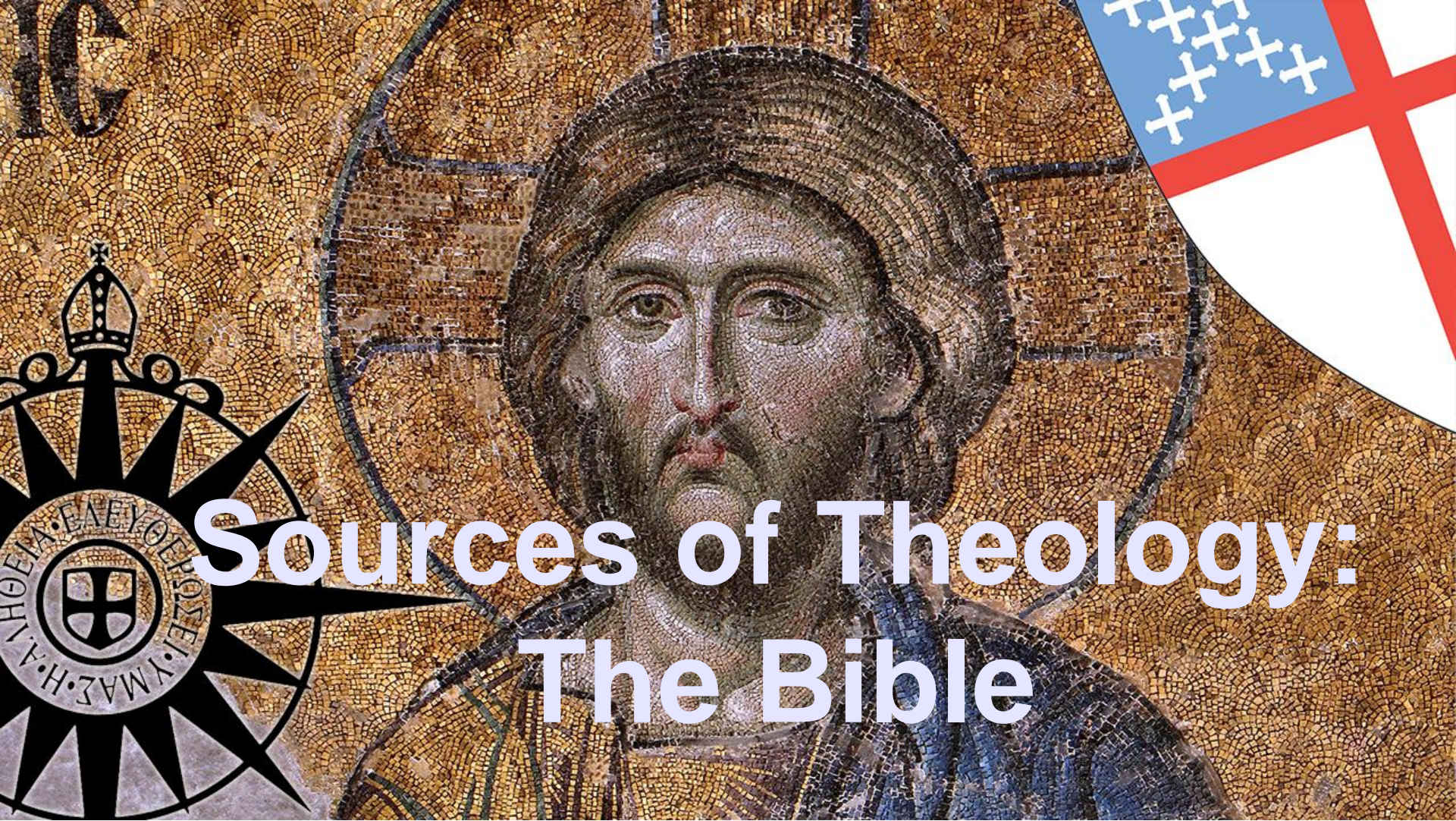
Liturgical Tradition

▫ *lex orandi, lex credendi* = the way you *pray*
shapes what you *believe*:

theology is intertwined with
worship and prayer

Summary: Anglican View of Tradition

- n We honor the reflections of past generations rooted in the scriptures (**single-source** tradition).
- n We have *no* comprehensive confession of faith:
 - n The **Creeds** are binding.
 - n The **39 Articles** are non-binding guides; they allow a great degree of theological freedom.
- n We place a special emphasis on **liturgical tradition** and *lex orandi, lex credendi*.



Sources of Theology: The Bible

What is the Bible?

- n The **Scriptures** = The **Bible** is a collection of texts recognized as authoritative for Christian thinking.
- n They are described as “canonical,” an adjective describing their authoritative nature:
 - n from the Greek *kanon* = “rule” or “yardstick.”
 - n The “rule” or “yardstick” by which all else be measured.

Books in the Bible

- n The Bible consists of an “Old” Testament and a “New” Testament:
- n **Old Testament**
 - n Reformers: Hebrew Bible = 39 books.
 - n Council of Trent 1546: Greek or Latin Bible (Vulgate, Septuagint) = 39 books + 14 “**apocryphal**” or “**deutero-canonical**” books.
- n **New Testament**
 - n 27 books (4 gospels, Acts, 21 letters, Revelation of John).

Anglicans and the Apocrypha

- n “Anglicanism holds an ambiguous or even contradictory attitude towards the Apocrypha.”
-- Owen Thomas, Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, in *Introduction to Theology*.

Anglicans and the Apocrypha

- n We can see this Anglican ambiguity towards the **Apocrypha** in the following:
 - n several lectionary readings in Book of Common Prayer are from the Apocrypha.
 - n Article 7 says: church does “not apply them to establish any doctrine.”
 - n Article 6 says: we read the Apocrypha “for example of life and instruction of manners.”

Some Bible Book Terminology

- n **Pentateuch** = Five books of **the Law** = **Torah** = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- n **Major Prophets** = first 4 prophetic writings in Old Testament = Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Daniel
- n **Minor Prophets** = remaining 12 prophetic writings = Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Some Bible Book Terminology

- n **Synoptic Gospels** = Matthew, Mark, Luke.
- n **Pastoral Epistles or Letters**: concerned with church order, pastoral matters: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus.
- n **Catholic Epistles or Letters**: not addressed to individuals: James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude.

Testament

- n **Testament** = strongly Christian theological term.
- n “Testament” = “Covenant.”
- n The coming of Christ inaugurated something *new*, a **New Covenant**, a covenant going beyond the **Old Covenant**.
- n Religious principles and ideas continue from the Old Covenant; religious practices do not (dietary laws. . .).
- n What Christians call the “Old Testament” is “the Law, Prophets and Writings” to Jews.

Basis for the Authority of Scripture

- n The basis for the *authority* of the Scripture comes from the:
 - n 1. early church, guided by the Spirit, which chose the canon,
 - n 2. intrinsic authority of the scriptures: they were written under the guidance of the Spirit,
 - n 3. guidance given by the Holy Spirit to any reader of the scriptures who is earnestly seeking the truth.
- n 1 & 2: “The canon of Scripture may be regarded as emerging organically from a community of faith already committed to using and respecting it.” (Allister McGrath).

Intrinsic Authority from Divine Inspiration

- n Belief in the second basis for the authority of the scriptures -- their intrinsic authority because they are divinely inspired -- comes from scripture itself:
- n “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16, NRSV)
- n The term “inspired by God” in this passage is the Greek *theopneustos* = “God-breathed.”

What Does Divine Inspiration Mean?

- n Views over what it means to be “inspired” by God have varied:
 - n biblical authors used like “flutes, lyres or pens in the hand of God,” or
 - n authors used their innate faculties and powers; the Spirit’s inspiration did not change their free will or human fallibility.

What Divine Inspiration is NOT

- n Note that divine inspiration is NOT the same as:
 - n absolute historical reliability, or
 - n factual inerrancy.
- n It has been understood for centuries that there are different ways of “interpreting” the divinely inspired text.
- n The fundamentalist view of “literal and historical inerrancy” of the Bible only began in 18th and 19th centuries.

The Quadriga

- n In the Middle Ages there was the **Quadriga** = “fourfold” sense of the Scriptures:
- n 1. **literal sense**. Face value.
- n 2. **allegorical sense**. Statements of doctrine in form of an allegory.
- n 3. **tropological or moral sense**. Ethical guidance.
- n 4. **anagogical sense**. Grounds for Christian hope, pointing to the future.

Luther's "EightFold" Sense

- n Martin Luther promoted an **"Eightfold" Sense** of the Scriptures.
- n He saw both a "historical" and a "prophetical" dimension to each of the four **Quadrigena** categories:
 - n 1&2. **literal sense**, historical and prophetical dimensions.
 - n 3&4. **allegorical sense**, historical and prophetical dimensions.
 - n 5&6. **tropological or moral sense**, historical and prophetical dimensions.
 - n 7&8: **anagogical sense**, historical and prophetical dimensions.

Calvin's Theory of Accommodation

- n John Calvin's promoted a **Theory of Accommodation**: Scripture is essentially God making Divine “Baby Talk” with us.
- n John Calvin: God *accommodates* to the capacities of the human mind and heart.
- n Origen: “God condescends and comes down to us, accommodating to our weakness, like a schoolmaster talking a ‘little language’ to his children, or like a father caring for his own children and adopting their ways.”
- n Scripture is divine “baby talk.” We are the babes.

Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation

- n Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation include:
- n **Textual Criticism** (or **Lower Criticism**) - tries to determine the original text.
- n **Literary Source Criticism** - tries to find *literary sources* which are basis of text.
- n **Form Criticism** (or **Traditional Criticism**) - tries to piece together the *oral traditions* that went into the text.
- n **Redaction Criticism** - tries to discover ways the author(s) *reshaped or modified* his sources, or *created new material* for the text.

Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation

- n Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation include:
- n **Historical Criticism** - tries to discover *authorship and date*, what actually happened historically.
- n **Comparative Religions Criticism** - looks for *patterns* believed to be common in the development of all religions.
- n **Structural Criticism** - looks at how the author used available *literary forms*.
- n **Reader - Response Criticism** - focuses on the meaning of the text *created by the reader*.

Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation

- n Essentially, the goals of modern biblical interpretation are to:
 - n 1. understand the words and language:
 - n what were the original words?
 - n what did they mean to the people of the time?
 - n what if anything was added on later? Why?

Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation

- n Essentially, the goals of modern biblical interpretation are to:
 - n 2. understand the author:
 - n where was author coming from?
 - n what was author's purposes, goals?
 - n how did he shape his message to accommodate his culture, society?

Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation

- n Essentially, the goals of modern biblical interpretation are to:
- n 3. understand ourselves:
 - n where are we coming from?
 - n how does our culture, society shape how we perceive the message?
 - n how does our own life shape how we perceive the message?

Summary: Bible as a Source of Theology

- n The **Bible** is our foremost source of our knowledge of God
- n The **Bible** is authoritative because:
 - n The early church chose the canon under the Spirit's guidance,
 - n Authors were divinely inspired, and
 - n The Spirit inspires us when we study the Bible.
- n Our study and understanding of the meaning (= interpretation) of the **Bible** is a lifelong, “living” process using:
 - n **Reason** (our own and that of other Christians), and
 - n **Tradition.**



***Next Week:
Spirituality***