



Rooted Disciples Session 3

The Rule of Faith

Articles VI-VIII

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Discuss: Why is Scripture different to any other text?

What is Scripture good for?

Article VI: The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.

'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation....'

Do the Articles begin in the correct place?

The Roman Catholic church has a different view of Scripture:

'God's revelation is one. Sacred Teaching and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit: the Word of God.' (Roman Catholic Catechism, 11).

1 Thessalonians 2:13.

'And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.'



Martin Luther in 1520 spoke of the 'Babylonian Captivity of the Church'. He held that the Roman Church held Christian believers captive to papal hierarchy and tyrannical power, placing human law and tradition above God's Word and preventing personal faith in Christ's promise.

Article VI reminds us that Scripture is our Rule of Faith.

'whatsoever is not read therein , nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an articles of faith, or be thought necessary or requisite to salvation.'

The church must therefore sit under Scripture and not ordain anything contrary to Scripture. In later articles we will see that Anglicanism does not believe churches sit alongside or above the Word. Councils can make mistakes and the church is only a witness to Scripture.

This may be a familiar idea to us, but don't switch off, because interesting points are made in the Articles.

The Canon- a measuring stick.

The 27 books of the New Testament were established by the fourth century. The church did not 'decide the Bible' as is sometimes crudely claimed. This would be to sit over the Bible.

Rather, the church recognized Scripture.

It is correctly said that it was about the church recognizing that which had authority as '*holy Scripture*'. An art collector recognizes a Rembrandt by certain features that mean they can add it to their collection of Rembrandts. They consider provenance, masterful use of dramatic light and shadow, color pigments characteristic of the 1650s. Collectors don't *make* something a Rembrandt. Similarly, Bible books effectively put themselves into the Canon. Canon means 'cane' - a thing which is employed as a measuring stick.

They were Old and New Testament books '*of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.*'

The Old Testament Canon as we now understand it 'is the list of books regarded by the Jews (and later by the church) as authoritative and divinely inspired' (Bray).

Regarding the New Testament authorship was key. Was it written by an Apostle or someone closely connected to an Apostle? Did it agree with other New Testament books? Did it agree with the Old Testament witness?

Titles for each of the four gospels were assigned based on early historical evidence of authorship. An example:

Gospel According to Mark- 'Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he had remembered, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord....' (Papias, alive c60-



130AD). Papias had not heard the apostles directly but made careful enquiry from those who knew the apostles.

It is important to say that the forming of the Canon was a process. 2 Peter was not adopted into the Canon early, but 'eventually overcame all objections....' (Bray).

'Other books' known as the Apocrypha were never included in the Jewish Canon. They are not quoted in the New Testament. They were not found in the Hebrew Bible, only in the Septuagint and only then in the appendix. 'Internal evidence also condemns them. Tobit and Judith have doctrinal, chronological, historical and geographical errors' (Griffiths). The Article says the Apocryphal books may be interesting to read, but we don't establish doctrine from them

The Unity of the Old and New Testaments.

'The Old Testament is not contrary to the New...' (Article VII)

This was to counter Marcion (c144) who taught the heresy that the God of the Old Testament was different to the God of the New.

Discuss: In what modern ways do we hear this same sentiment expressed?

It is wrongly assumed that Old Testament people had no idea of a mediator and believed God to accord with the unitarian view we see today. In this way of thinking, Christ only becomes relevant in the New Testament.

Look at the brilliant answer to this in Article VII:

'for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, being both God and man.'

As a friend of mine said, one ought to preach the Old Testament in a way that would have you ejected from the Synagogue.

'The New Testament is essentially a commentary on the Old, insisting that the promises of the law and prophets had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ' (Gerald Bray).

This is why Jesus could say without flinching: 'How foolish you are, and how slow you are to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things....' (Luke 24:25-26). For Jesus, the events of the gospel were evident from the Old Testament on its own terms. There was enough for the Old Testament Jew to respond to Jesus Christ in faith and to do otherwise was inexcusable.



Promises concerning Christ in the Old Testament

'Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the Old Fathers did look only to transitory promises.'

This is saying that they knew that the promises about David, for example, were ultimately about David's greater Son, the Messiah.

Read Acts 2:29-32

It is sometimes argued that the prophets spoke 'better than they knew.' However, Acts says clearly that David saw what was to come. We can say that David trusted in the Messiah. He might not have known that his name would be Jesus when he came at the incarnation, but he understood the promises were about the coming Mediator who was God and man.

The saints of old also understood that they would be resurrected to eternal life, despite modern scholars objecting to this very often (Psalm 16:11, Hebrews 11).

As we look back at the Old Testament, how are we to understand Christ as being present?

Prophecy

An example:

'the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel' (Isaiah 4:14)

Typology

Romans 5:14

What is Adam referred to as?

The word pattern is *typos*. An example of this typology is seen in the verses which follow. Romans 5:18-19. Other types include, Moses, the Passover lamb and the High Priest. How do we understand them to be types, and can you locate New Testament proof of this?



Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament

While this does not have unilateral acceptance among theologians, understanding of appearances of Christ in the New Testament have a strong tradition among the early church, in Roman Catholic Theology and among many Reformed Evangelicals of the past (e.g. the Puritans).

For example, Isaiah 6:1-3. See what the gospel writer says of this in John 12:41.

Allegory

For example, Ruth 3:9 and the covering which the kinsman redeemer provides Ruth may be noticed by a Bible reader. They see that Scripture often speaks of God covering his people with salvation: 'For he has clothed me with garments of salvation' (Isaiah 61:10). Many Christians have seen this as alluding to the covering that we receive from Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer (Believers are 'clothed with Christ' Galatians 3:27).

Allegory is about building a picture that can be supported by a range of texts and where we can be sure of authorial intent. In my view a careless interpretation would be understanding the suspension of pomegranates from the high priest's robe as symbolic of Christ's resurrection as some have done! This is because it seems to be reading a meaning into the text that is divorced from the original context and where scripture does not support the idea elsewhere.

The best way of noticing allegory in the Old Testament is where the New Testament says exactly to understand the symbolism in the Old.

For example:

Galatians 4:21-31

John 3:14

The Law

Article 7 concludes by saying that there are aspects of the law which are not binding upon Christian people today and does this via a threefold understanding of the law: civil, moral and ceremonial. While there may be other ways to understand the law in the New Testament era, it is a helpful tool that is broadly true.



Article VIII: Of the Three Creeds

'I don't say Creeds, because I only believe the Bible'

Anglicans don't believe this is wise along with the greater part of Christendom. The reason for this is that the contents of the creeds can be '*proved by most certain warrants of Scripture.*'

The Athanasian Creed is little known by Christians today but is exceptionally helpful in exposing and avoiding heresy concerning the Godhead as we heard in our previous session.

Questions:

How would you answer someone who says that we only know what to believe because the church has told us?

What have you found interesting today?