



## Rooted Disciples Session 6

### 'The Household of Faith'

#### Articles XIX- XXII

These notes are the jottings of Rev Dr Andrew Atherstone with help from WH Griffiths 'The principles of theology'.

#### **Article 19: Of the Church**

*The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred: so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.*

- Notes or marks of the 'visible' church
  - 'congregation' of Christians ('faithful men')
  - Biblical preaching ('pure word of God')
  - Biblical sacraments ('according to Christ's ordinance')
    - 'duly administered'? Not defined – probably a reference to giving the cup to the laity
  - Not concerned here with the 'invisible church'
  - Against Roman view of the church as a worldwide institution
- The visible church is fallible
  - In the past
    - Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch (three great sees in the early church)
  - In the present
    - Rome
    - Not just in discipline, but doctrine too
    - Against Roman claims to infallibility



## **Article 20: Of the Authority of the Church**

*The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith; and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything contrary to God's word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ: yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.*

- What authority does the church have?
  - 'power' (Latin *jus*) over 'rites and ceremonies' (discipline)
    - Against Puritan protests
  - 'authority' (Latin *auctoritatis*) over 'controversies of faith' (doctrine)
    - 'authority' weaker than 'power'
    - Even then, not authority over all aspects of faith, but only matters in dispute
    - Against Roman church's claim to power over all things
  - What role for individual and private judgment?
  
- Limits of church authority
  - Nothing contrary to Scripture
  - Nothing contrary to one part of Scripture (because the Bible is one consistent book)
  
- What is the relationship between church and Bible?
  - Church testifies to the Bible – 'a witness' (Latin *testis*)
  - Church preserves the Bible as it is – 'a keeper' (Latin *conservatrix*)
  - NB, church is not 'judge' or 'maker' of Scripture
  
  - Church is subordinate to Bible
  - Not to decree anything against the Bible ('not to decree anything against the same')
  - Not to demand anything in addition to the Bible ('besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation')



## **Article 21: Of the Authority of General Councils**

*General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes. And when they be gathered together, forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and word of God, they may err and sometime have erred, even in things pertaining to God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.*

- Corollary of Article 20: If the church has authority, where is it exercised?
- ‘General Councils’ = Ecumenical Councils
  - Not national, provincial or diocesan synods (e.g. General Synod, Lambeth Conference)
  - Reformers usually admit 4 or 6
    - Nicea (325)
    - Constantinople (381)
    - Ephesus (431)
    - Chalcedon (451)
    - Constantinople (553)
    - Constantinople (680-1)
  - Eastern Orthodox admit 7 or 8
    - Including Council of Nicea (787)
  - Rome claims about 21
    - Including Trent (1545-63), Vatican I (1870), Vatican II (1962-5)
- Who may call councils?
  - ‘the commandment and will of princes’
  - Early councils called by Emperors (e.g. Constantine the Great)
  - Later councils called and ruled by Popes
- Fallibility of councils
  - In possibility – ‘may err’
  - In fact – ‘have erred’
  - Because not all participants are faithful Christians (*whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and word of God*)
  - Not listening to the Holy Spirit and the Bible
- Authority of councils
  - Subordinate to Bible
  - May only decree matters of faith which are proved from the Bible (*‘taken out of Holy Scripture’*)
  - Consistent with Article 8 (about the Nicea-Constantinople Creed)
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Famous words of Gregory Nazianzen: ‘If I must write the truth, I am disposed to avoid every assembly of bishops; for of no synod have I seen a profitable end; rather an addition to, than a diminution of, evils; for the love of strife and the thirst of superiority are beyond the power of words to express.’



## **Article 22: Of Purgatory**

*The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, worshipping and adoration as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saint, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture; but rather repugnant to the word of God.*

- ‘Romish doctrine’
  - Article of 1553 read ‘the doctrine of the School authors’
  - Newman in *Tract Ninety* used this to argue that article criticizes popular medieval piety not official Roman dogma (Trent did not promulgate decree on purgatory until December 1563)
  - But standard Roman teaching in view
  
- Doctrines opposed
  - RC doctrine of purgatory
    - Eternal punishment borne by Christ, but temporal punishment still to be paid
    - Proof text: I Corinthians 3:15: ‘saved, even if through flames’
    - First major theologian to teach purgatory was Gregory the Great in 600
    - Formally declared by council of Florence in 1439
  - RC doctrine of indulgences
    - ‘pardons’ (Latin *de indulgentiis*)
    - connected with doctrine of purgatory
  - RC doctrine of worship and adoration of images
    - Second Council of Nicea (787) (‘seventh ecumenical council’) reintroduced veneration of images, and rebuked iconoclasm
  - RC doctrine of worship and adoration of images
  - RC doctrine of invocation of saints
  
- Why opposed
  - ‘fond’ (Latin *futilis*) = silly, foolish, absurd
  - ‘vainly invented’ = falsely devised
  - unscriptural – ‘grounded upon no warranty of Scripture’
  - anti-scriptural – ‘repugnant to the Word of God’ (phrase reappears in Articles 24, 28, 34)