

## Renaissance & Reformation – Reading Scripture

*“Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given to us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”* (BCP, Proper 28)

“The Reformation was awash with words. The historian who tries to catch its essence finds his net breaking under the weight of words...The formulation “Word of God,” which among Protestants especially became a synonym for the Bible, made the elusive abstraction “the Word” hard and fast, more concrete, anchoring it in biblical texts, which were given a new and absolute authority: *sola scriptura*. The Church was to be validated by the Bible, not the Bible by the Church.” (*The Reformation: A History*, by Collinson)

The Renaissance – Technology and Humanism combine to create a new era of learning

- Humanism: allowed the broad public to become educated in the basics of reading, writing, and language. Classic literature and broad based education was its foundation rather than the specialized scholastic education that preceded the new concepts outlined by humanistic methods.
- Technology: Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press was first developed in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and within 100 years printing presses were found throughout Europe. The printing press, a major technological breakthrough itself, allowed theologians, scientists, and educators to rapidly spread their thoughts and provide books to the masses for information and education.

The Reformation – A call for renewal and a return to the Bible

- As the 14<sup>th</sup> century came to a close, the papacy was in decline and corrupted by a series of poor leaders; the people believed in the Church but had lost trust in the Pope and most Church leaders, many of whom sought personal gain more than a religious life; and local languages were gaining respect and prominence, leading to stronger feelings of nationalism. (*The Story of Christianity*, p. 6-9)
- Erasmus of Holland: known as the “Prince of Humanists” was a well-known advocate of understanding Christianity as a life that should be “decent, moderate, and balanced.” Erasmus understood obedience to a good Christian life as extremely important, “believing obedience as more important than doctrine. He did believe that doctrines were important...but he insisted that righteousness was more important than orthodoxy, and he frequently attacked friars who were capable of subtle theological discussions, but whose lives were scandalous.” (*The Story of Christianity*, p. 11)

The Reformation in England – The Anglican Middle Way

- Richard Hooker: “Two opinions therefore there are concerning sufficiency of Holy Scripture, each extremely opposite unto the other, and both repugnant unto truth. The schools of Rome teach Scripture to be so unsufficient, as if, except traditions were added, it did not contain all revealed and supernatural truth, which absolutely is necessary for the children of men in this life to know that they may in the next be saved. Others justly condemning this opinion grow

likewise unto a dangerous extremity, as if Scripture did not only contain all things in that kind necessary, but all things simply, and in such sort that to do any thing according to any other law were not only unnecessary but even opposite unto salvation, unlawful and sinful. Whatever is spoken of God or things appertaining to God otherwise than as the truth is, though it seem an honour, it is an injury.” (from *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book II*, found in *Anglicanism* by More and Cross, p. 89)

- “By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformation, the Bible as a *book* had assumed a role in the religious life of the English people which their forebears had never known – despite the many witnesses to a genuine reverence given to Holy Scriptures throughout the centuries.” (*Anglicanism and the Bible*, p. 13)

Lenten themes during the period:

- Fractured Western Church worships according to regional political and theological outcomes
  - Roman Catholic Church remains strong in Italy, France, and Spain
  - Reformed Protestantism spreads throughout the remainder of continental Europe
  - England, Scotland, and Wales adopt the Anglican “middle way”
    - Ireland is generally considered part of the Anglican reforms, but the Roman Catholic Church remains strong in nearly all areas except the north (Ulster)
- The “changing Church” may appear similar to the chaos of the Medieval period, but people are becoming educated – the changing religious landscape facilitates a greater personal piety
- **People are more interested in reading Scripture and developing their own understanding of God’s presence in their lives and how this relates to the practical aspects of daily life.**

Holy Scripture – hearing/reading God’s Word and discerning lessons for daily life:

- Methods:
  - Many methods of biblical study and meditation; we will consider one below
  - Ignatian Spirituality
    - Reading Scripture and creatively imagining each role in the story
    - Focus on one particular aspect (role/lesson/verse) and “take it with you throughout your day/week
    - Discern how the “real world” informs and changes your initial understanding of your Scripture reading and vice versa

**Matthew 9:1-8** *And after getting into a boat Jesus crossed the sea and came to his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he then said to the paralytic -- "Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." And he stood up and went to his home. When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.*

- Paralyzed man: taking the role of someone dependent on others for help
- Scribes: taking the role of someone judgmental or doubting of others’ motives
- Someone in the crowd: taking the role of a new member in a group

Information obtained from the following sources:

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