

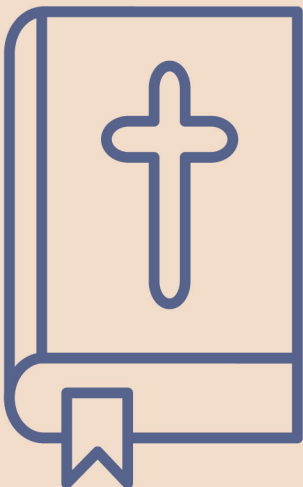
THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL

OR: ANGLICAN SOURCES OF AUTHORITY



RICHARD HOOKER

The 16th-century Anglican theologian Richard Hooker is credited with proposing these three sources. He sought a middle way between a Catholic overreliance on tradition and the Puritan belief that the Bible needed no interpretation. The stool metaphor was later developed to help people understand this approach.



SCRIPTURE

The Holy Scriptures, or the Bible, are those books written by human beings and inspired by God that serve as the source for God's revelation against which all other Christian teaching is evaluated. For Anglicans, the Bible includes the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha.

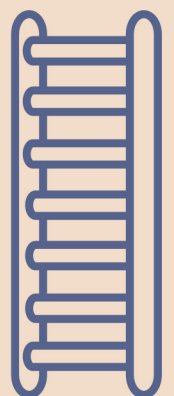
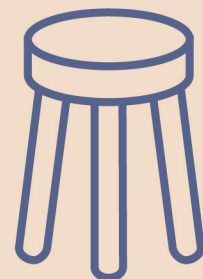


Anglicanism, which includes The Episcopal Church, accepts three sources of authority for theological reflection about God and the World: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. These three together are frequently called the three-legged stool.



REASON

Reason is more than logic. It encompasses the human capacity to discern truth about God and the world through observation, logic, and intuition. Thus, for Anglicans, reason also includes experience.



Some ask whether the stool is the best metaphor for the sources of authority. Some thinkers contend that Hooker saw reason and tradition as the means to interpret scripture, which is the highest authority. If so, the image of the ladder may be more appropriate.

TRADITION

The Church's ongoing reflection about God and God's activity in the world that has been handed down through history.

