

LESSONS FROM CHURCH HISTORY

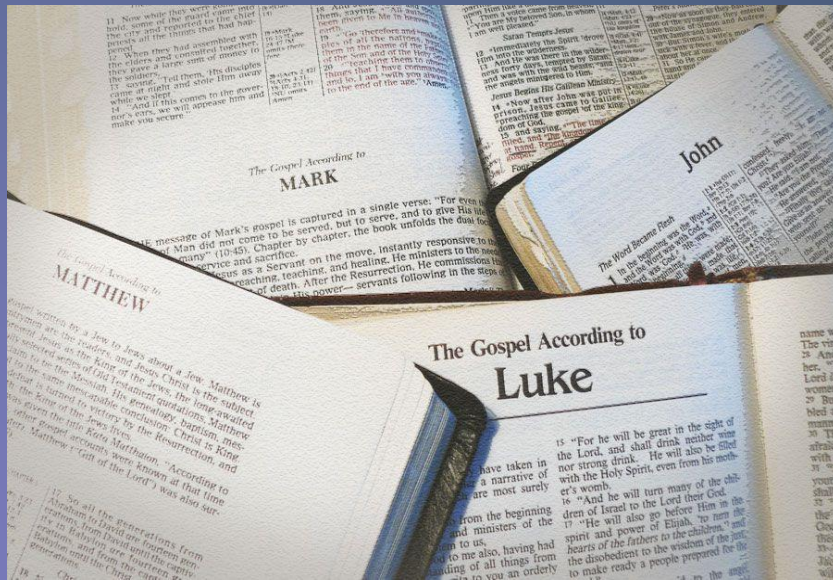


Week 3: Canon, Creeds, Confessions, & Theology

CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

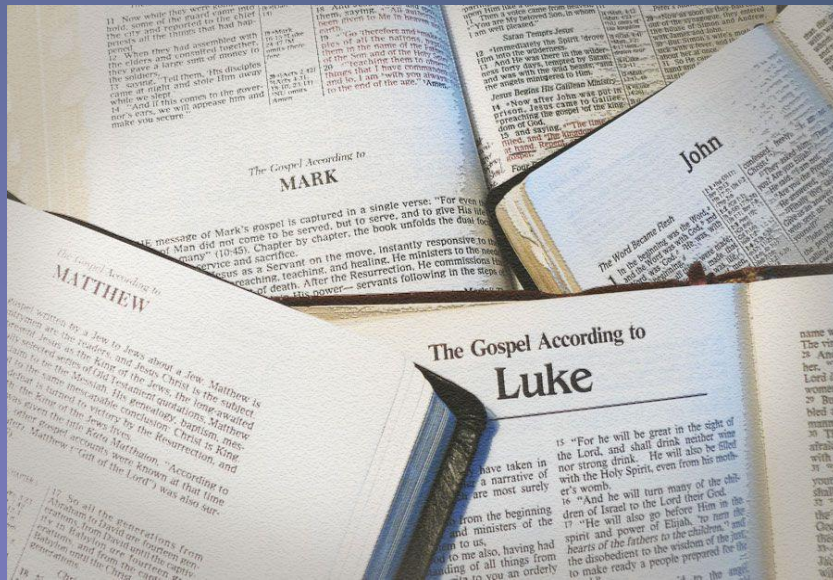
- Canon = “rule, standard by which something is judged to be true or false”
- Canon was not “formed” but “recognized.”
- Hebrew Bible well-established by 300 BC. Ta-na-kh = Torah (law), Neviim (prophets) & Ketuvim (writings). See Luke 24:44; 11:51.
- Early Fathers quoted from all 27 NT books
- 21 NT books recognized very early as inspired Scripture: (1) 4 Gospels; (2) Acts; (3) Paul’s 13 letters; (4) 1 Peter; (5) 1 John; (6) Revelation (skepticism only later)
- Muratorian canon (AD 180) lists 22 books (No Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 3 John).



CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

- Origen made a list of all 27 books in AD 250.
- Criteria for Recognizing Canon:
 - (1) Apostolicity
 - (2) Orthodoxy
 - (3) Catholicity
- Test Case: *The Gospel of Thomas*
Fails Apostolicity – written AD 180-90.
Fails Orthodoxy – promotes Gnosticism.
Fails Catholicity – first discovered in 1945.
- Test Case: *Shepherd of Hermas* (AD 90-140),
Didache (AD 70-110)
Passes Orthodoxy and Catholicity test.
Fails Apostolicity.



CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY



CREEDS

Apostle's Creed (3rd cent)

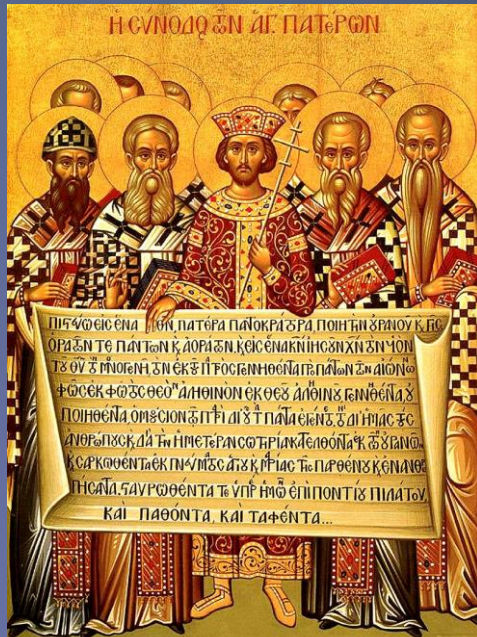
- Fragments as early as 2nd c. Mentioned by Ambrose (389), finalized in AD 700-800.
- Possibly early baptismal confession.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY

Constantine and the Bishops
at the Council of Nicaea



CREEDS

Nicene Creed (325 & 381)

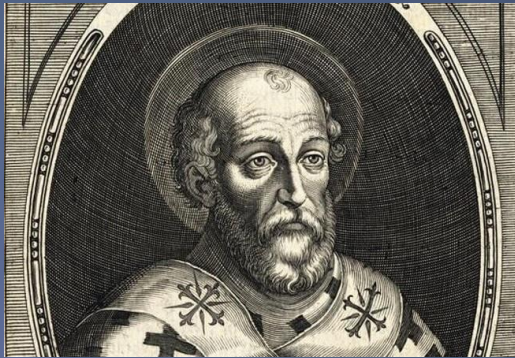
- Initial creed at Council of Nicaea (325)
Finalized at Council of Constantinople I (381)

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten from the Father before all time, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father, through whom all things came into being;

Who for us men, and because of our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father and will come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY

Athanasius of
Alexandria



Council of
Chalcedon



CREEDS

Athanasian Creed (5th cent)

- Neither written by Athanasius nor a creed.
- Detailed Trinitarian statement of belief.

Chalcedon Definition (451)

- Codified orthodox view on the two natures of Christ, addressing various heresies.

We confess one and the same Son...the same perfect in Godhead and...manhood, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body, consubstantial [*homoousios*] with the Father...and...with us...Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten; acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being in no way removed by the union, but rather the properties of each nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into one person [*prospan*] and one *hypostasis* [person]; not parted or divided into two persons [*prospa*], but one and the same Son and only-begotten God.

CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY

Westminster Assembly (1643-53)



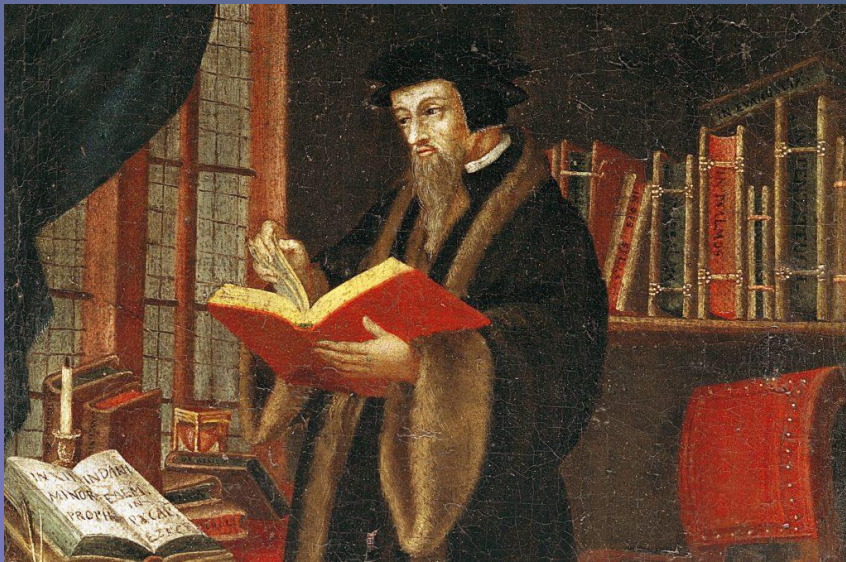
CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

Important Historic Confessions

- Luther's Large and Small Catechisms (1529).
- *Augsburg Confession* (1530) – Philip Melancthon
- *Book of Concord* (1580) – Lutheran. Collection of historic creeds and Lutheran confessions.
- *First and Second Helvetic Confessions* (1536-64) – Swiss Reformers. Calvinistic.
- *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1536-71) – Anglican.
- *Book of Common Prayer* (1549-1662) – Anglican. Contains orders for worship, baptism, communion.
- Three Forms of Unity – Dutch Reformed. (1) *Belgic Confession* (1561); (2) *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563); (3) *Canons of Dordt* (1619).
- *Westminster Standards* (1643-53) – English Reformed/ Presbyterian. (1) *Westminster Confession of Faith*; (2) *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*; (3) *Directory for Public Worship*. Has shaped all subsequent Reformed thinking.
- *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689) – Reformed Baptist. Follows much of the Westminster Confession.

CANON, CREEDS, CONFESSIONS & THEOLOGY

John Calvin in his Study



HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

- Bible (Bibliology)
 - Authority, Sufficiency, Clarity – 1500-1575
 - Inerrancy – 1700-2000
- God (Theology Proper) – 300-700
- Creation – 1875-2000
- Salvation (Soteriology) – 1500-1650
- Church (Ecclesiology) – 1500-1750
 - Baptism – 1525-1650
 - Lord's Supper 1525-75
- End Times (Eschatology)
 - Premillennialism – 100-300
 - Amillennialism – 300-500
 - Postmillennialism – 1750-1850
 - Covenant Theology – 1550-1650
 - Dispensational Theology (Premillennial) – 1800-1950
- Man-centered versus God-centered Theology:
 - Nature of Man (Anthropology)
 - Sin (Hamartiology)
 - Divine Sovereignty & Salvation (Soteriology)
 - Augustine vs. Pelagius – 375-430
 - Calvinism vs. Arminianism – 1500-1650
 - Calvinism vs. Wesleyanism – 1750-1850.