

## **Events:**

### ***Organizing the Canon of Scripture***

- Where did the book we call the Bible come from? Canon – “measuring rod”
- The Old Testament
  - Early Christians accepted the Hebrew Old Testament from the beginning and soon began to see literal (promises) and allegorical (signs) references to Christ
- The Apocrypha
  - The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) contained twelve to fifteen other books that the Hebrew Scripture did not have
  - The early Western church (Rome) accepted these “apocryphal” books, but the Eastern church (Constantinople) did not to a great extent
  - The founders of the Reformation decided to omit the Apocrypha because none of these books are quoted by Christ or the apostles
  - The modern Roman Catholic church still uses them
- The New Testament
  - Originally many manuscripts and letters circulating but not organized
  - Subject to inclusion or omission by the “teacher” (Marcion or Montanus)
  - Irenaeus was one of the first to demonstrate the need for a “canon” in order to defend orthodox teaching against the heresies
  - Muratorian Canon was developed around 200 by the Roman church
  - Origen (c. 250) and Eusebius (c.300) also published similar canons
  - Current 27 books were listed by Athanasius in an Easter letter in 367
  - This list was ratified by the Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397)
  - “The Shepherd of Hermas” and “The Didache” were two important early “teaching manuals” that were not included

## **Heroes:**

### ***Tertullian***

- Born around 160 in Carthage, North Africa. Died around 220.
- Very little is known about Tertullian’s life outside of his own writings. Eusebius and Jerome also wrote about him but did not add much information.
- He was supposedly born the son of a Roman centurion. He is claimed to have been ordained but does not say so in his own writings. He is claimed to have also been a lawyer.
- According to his own writings, he became a Christian in 197. Tradition says that he was ordained around 200.
- He became a Montanist in 206 and separated from the church by 211 or 213.
- He wrote many books over the next 25 or so years: apologetic (9 known), polemic (6 known), dogmatic (11 known) and moral (6 known). Others writings were known but have since been lost.

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- His writings taught:
  - Apostolic succession is the best defense against Gnosticism
  - The parents create a human soul at the time of conception (traducianism) and not God (creationism). This also explains the soul's sinful nature.
  - God, the Son and the Spirit are "one substance" and "three persons" and pre-dating the Council of Nicea's teaching
  - Christ's suffering and crucifixion are efficacious. Baptism and penance are the "two planks" that save a sinner from shipwreck.
  - Scripture is the "rule of faith" for believers. The prophets were before the philosophers. Quotation – "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem."
  - Murderers and fornicators should never be allowed in the church even when they repent (probably from his Montanist beliefs)
- Nothing is known about his death. Jerome states that he lived to a "ripe old age." But nothing is written by him or about him after around 220.

### ***Clement of Alexandria***

- Born around 150 probably in Athens. Died around or shortly after 215.
- Little is known about his life outside his own writings
- He was trained in classical Greek philosophy and his writings exemplify his use of the Greek language and quotations from Greek poets and philosophers
- He wrote a trilogy of works ("Exhortation", "Instruction", and "Miscellanies") which used the Greek form of argument to defend orthodox beliefs and Christian moral values
- His teaching was greatly needed by the Egyptian church, which was living in fear from the Gnostic and philosophical attacks against them
- He traveled around the world (Greece, Italy, Palestine and Egypt) in order to learn as much as possible
- He finally settled in Alexandria at the Catechetical School led by one Pantaenus, whom he eventually succeeded as head of the school
- Clement's most famous student at the school was Origen (185-254)
- His significance in church history includes:
  - He turned early church tradition into a systematic and scientific theology
  - He attributed philosophy as an operation of the "divine Logos" and not an opposition to it
  - He spoke out against Gnosticism and Epicureanism
  - He claimed that "faith" is the founder of "gnosis" and both are given by Christ
  - He taught a great emphasis on the fulfillment of moral obligation
  - He taught that the only way to achieve union with God was through the way taught by the church

## **Heresies:**

### ***Docetism***

- Arose in the 1<sup>st</sup> century from the area near and around Greek Alexandria (Egypt).
- At its root, Docetism denies the humanity of Christ
- Its origin is the Greek word “dokeo”, which means “to appear” or “to seem”.
- Christ did not actually come to the earth in a physical body. It only seemed or appeared that He did so by a spiritual (or spectral) means – a “hologram”.
- It is a form of Gnosticism in which the physical body is evil. So, as a result, how would it be possible that God could take on a physical body?
- Docetism denies that Christ ever actually suffered or felt pain. Some even claim that Christ Himself was not crucified but that it was really Simon the Cyrene.
- Irenaeus and Hippolytus refuted Docetism in the 2nd century.
- Religions that promise fulfillment without trials or suffering are modern forms of Docetism: Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy), New Age, “Prosperity Gospel”. Today’s message seems to be, “You can avoid pain, suffering, and even death if you are spiritual enough”.
- Docetism leads to escapism from suffering – alcoholism, drug abuse, “social” addictions such as sexual or gambling, and even suicide – ironic since its goal is to avoid suffering.

### ***Marcionism***

- A Gnostic belief system established in Rome by Marcion of Sinope after he was excommunicated from the Church of Rome around 144.
- He believed that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be the Savior and that Paul was his chief apostle
- He rejected all the Hebrew Scripture and declared Yahweh as a demiurge who created the world and was the source of evil in the world. Yahweh was jealous, inconsistent, wrathful and genocidal.
- The God of the New Testament is loving, kind and merciful. Christ is His spirit and was not human (Docetism).
- He constructed his own canon:
  - A modified Gospel of Luke (omitting prophecies of the coming, the birth and the baptism and being more terse in general)
  - Ten of Paul’s epistles (all but 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Hebrews)
  - Two of Paul’s “other” epistles (to the Laodiceans and the Alexandrians)
- Many of the major church writers including Irenaeus, Tertullian and Eusebius condemned his teachings as heretical
- Some claim Marcion was not really Gnostic because he rejected all the creation myths and used Scripture (albeit his own version) rather than mystical teaching

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**Montanism**

- A Gnostic belief system established in Phrygia (Turkey) by Montanus and two women, Prisca and Maximilla sometime between 135 and 177.
- They taught that they were the literal mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit – not in the sense of the Old Testament prophets in the third person (“Thus says the Lord”), but as the Spirit speaking in the first person directly through them in ecstatic, out-of-their-own-control utterances and visions
- The main objection lay in their “adding to” Scripture (Revelation 22:18)
  - Teaching of “The Three” superceded the teaching of the apostles
  - Encouraging ecstatic prophesying over sober and disciplined theology
  - Those who sin after “believing” could not be restored to grace
  - Stronger emphasis on avoiding sin and on discipline than was orthodox
  - Many were “quartodecimans” – believing that Easter should be celebrated on 14 Nisan regardless of the day of the week rather than the orthodox view of celebrating Easter on the Sunday following 14 Nisan
- Many church fathers fell prey to the Montanists, including the Eleuterus, Bishop of Rome (174-189) and even Tertullian
- The sect was mostly defeated by the 300’s, but remained active in some areas of Turkey until the 800’s