

Lecture 6-To Mark a Path: Canon, Creed & Bishops

In the desert, the nomad Arabs place stone piles on the mountaintops to mark a path through the pathless wilderness. If they did not, no man could keep to his course but would wander too far from water and lose his life. I have come to value markers, brothers, when all around is mysterious land.
 Sheri Holman, *A Stolen Tongue*, p. 247

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 Timothy 2:2

Assigned Reading

The Story of Christianity—chapter 8, pp. 62-66

Key Terms

Canon, creed, bishop

Objectives

- Identify the “markers” of the church
- Discuss the differences between canon and creed
- Discuss the role of bishops in the early church

Class Prayer

“Jesus, Lamb of God:

have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins:

have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world:

give us your peace. Amen.”

The Agnus Dei

To Mark a Path: Canon, Creed & Bishops**I. Canon**

A. Old Testament: canonical and deuterocanonical (Jerome)

B. New Testament: list drawn up by Athanasius (367)

C. Principle: recognition rather than imposition

“The authority of the Scriptures does not rest “on the authority of the Church. The Church may bear witness to what she received from the apostles as law, but this is not giving authority to that law but humbly recognizing the authority which rightly belongs to it whether the Church recognizes it or not. The puzzle which some people fall into here is something like mistaking the relative ‘authority’ of the guide-post and the road; the guide-post may point us to the right road but it does not give its rightness to the road. It has not ‘determined’ the road—it is the road that has ‘determined’ the guide-post; and unless the road goes of itself to its destination the guide-post has no power to determine its direction. So the Church does not ‘determine’ the Scriptures, but the Scriptures the Church.”

B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings* 2: 538

1. _____ evidence
2. _____ evidence

“The fixing of the Christian canon of Scripture means that the church itself...traced a clear and definite line of demarcation between the period of the apostles and that of the church, between the time of foundation and that of construction...between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition...From that time every subsequent tradition must be submitted to the control of the apostolic tradition.”

Oscar Cullman, *Eerdmans Handbook*, pp. 14-15

II. Creed

A. The first creeds

Quo Vadis—”When Vinitius first met Ligia, she drew something on the sand—and ran away. A fish!” “*Ichthus*” = Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour.

B. The Apostles Creed

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ His only 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 sitteth on 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. Amen.”

C. “The rule of faith”

D. What has been believed “everywhere, always, and by all” (Vincent of Lerin)

1. The historical problem
2. The theological problem

III. Bishops

A. New Testament and 1st century: _____ and deacons

B. Where did the “bishops” come from and why?

1. Ignatius of Antioch (early second century)—single bishop
2. Irenaeus (late second century)—apostolic succession
3. Why? Efficiency and orthodoxy

C. The most important churches

1. In the _____: Jerusalem, Caesarea, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople
2. In the _____: Rome (Irenaeus: “For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church, on account of its preeminent authority.”)

Questions for Consideration

1. Is there any truth to the claim that Peter was the first pope?
2. Was the origin of bishops the beginning of pastoral government?