Institutionalization: Canon and Liturgy

March 24, 2006

- Reminder: Passion of the Christ
  Wed., March 29, 0302H Hornbake Library

Sources
- Local tradition, division, and consensus
- Canonization
- Liturgy

Sources for development of Christian Canon, Liturgy

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<th>Canon</th>
<th>Liturgy</th>
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<td>Muratorian Canon</td>
<td>&quot;Church Orders&quot;</td>
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<td>Comments in Church Fathers</td>
<td>Didache</td>
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<td>Justin Martyr</td>
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<td>Tertullian</td>
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<td>Other writings by Church Fathers</td>
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Local tradition, division, and consensus

- Common tradition
  - Scripture (Old Testament/Hebrew Bible)
  - Jesus tradition (although contents might differ)
- Serious local differences
  - Matthew circulated in Syria; Luke, perhaps John in Asia Minor
  - Different traditions about practice, meaning of Eucharist
- Construction of consensus (emergence of proto-orthodoxy?)
  - On canon and liturgy (with subsisting differences)
  - Process predates, but is hastened by, Christianization of empire (4th Century)
Canonization

- **Canon**: An approved list of books that are meant for liturgical purposes.
- Current “New Testament”
- “Current” list first attested as such by Athanasius, Festal Letter, 367
- Evidence of ancient manuscripts and earlier Church Fathers
- Reasons for canonization?

Current “New Testament”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gospels and Acts</th>
<th>Paul</th>
<th>“Catholic Letters”</th>
<th>Revelation (Apocalypse)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew, Mark</td>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luke, John, Acts</td>
<td>1, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews</td>
<td>1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude, Revelation</td>
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Evidence of ancient manuscripts and Church Fathers

- Manuscripts reflect alternative collections (e.g., Codex Sinaiticus, earliest complete NT, mid 4th C)
- “Muratorian Canon” (2nd C?) possibly earliest list
  - already reflects traditions of gospel authorship ("differences make no difference")
  - accepts *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Apocalypses of John and Peter*
  - Shepherd of Hermes too recent to be included though it should be read
  - Note categories: “[Shepherd] should be read but it cannot be published for the people in the Church …”
- Eusebius (4th C) divides into Recognized, Disputed (including Apocalypse, etc.), and Spurious
- Earliest full attestation of “our” list: Athanasius, 367
Reasons for canonization?

- Growing density of interaction between communities, paired with growing institutionalization
- Common “perceived threats,” e.g., Marcion and other “heresies”
  - Marcion: 2nd C. teacher who rejected Jewish God and Bible for a purged and Luke and Letters of Paul
- Attempt of some factions to gain control over what the collective was doing (“growth of proto-orthodoxy”)
- Accelerated with Christianization of Empire

Liturgy

- Again, earliest sources point to diverse local practices and interpretations of those practices. E.g. Baptism (Bradshaw)
  - Syria: “Christiological” (anointing, receiving Spirit as in Christ’s baptism)
  - Rome, North Africa: “Soteriological” (sharing in Christ’s passage from death to resurrection)
- Again, drift toward commonality (esp. in 4th C and later: Bradshaw and McGowan), for some of the same reasons
- Possible sources for ritual models: Jewish practices, meal practices of associations, etc., Bible (i.e., OT) and Christian “myth” (as it crystallizes in NT)
Significant ritual occasions

- Baptism — increasingly formalized (season, practices, words, officiants)
- Eucharist — eventually ritualized rather than actual meal
- Lord’s Day — Note that church meetings divide the “enlightened” from non-baptized, frequently men from women, etc.
- Easter — question of date
- Other days