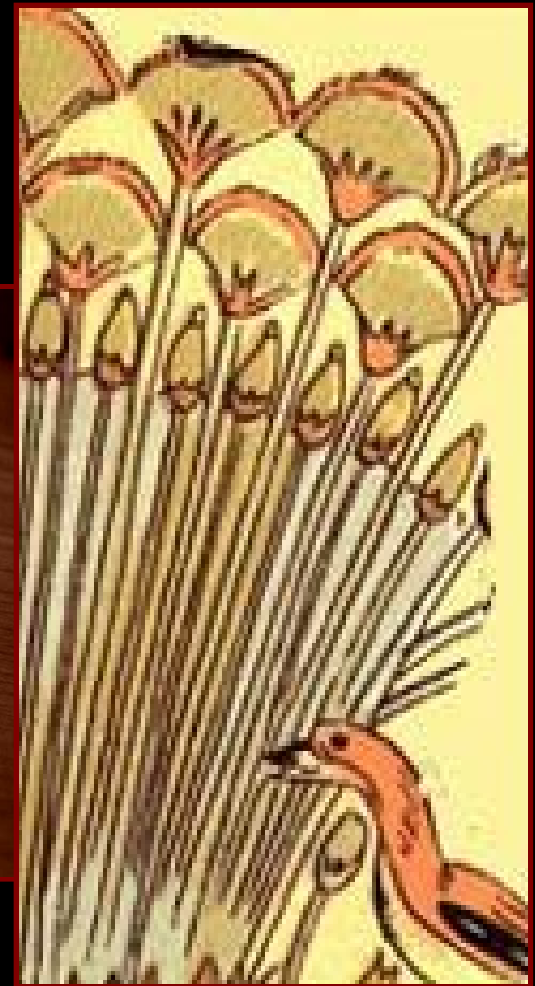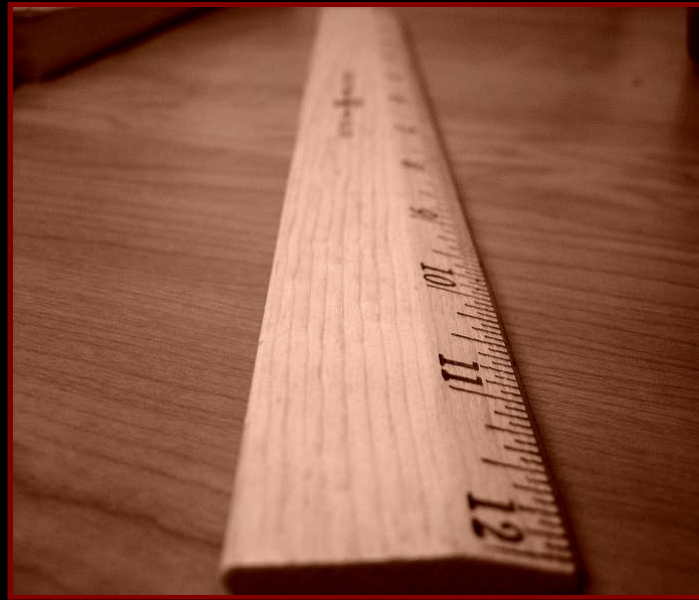# The Voice of God?
Canon and Inspiration

New Testament Theology and History II
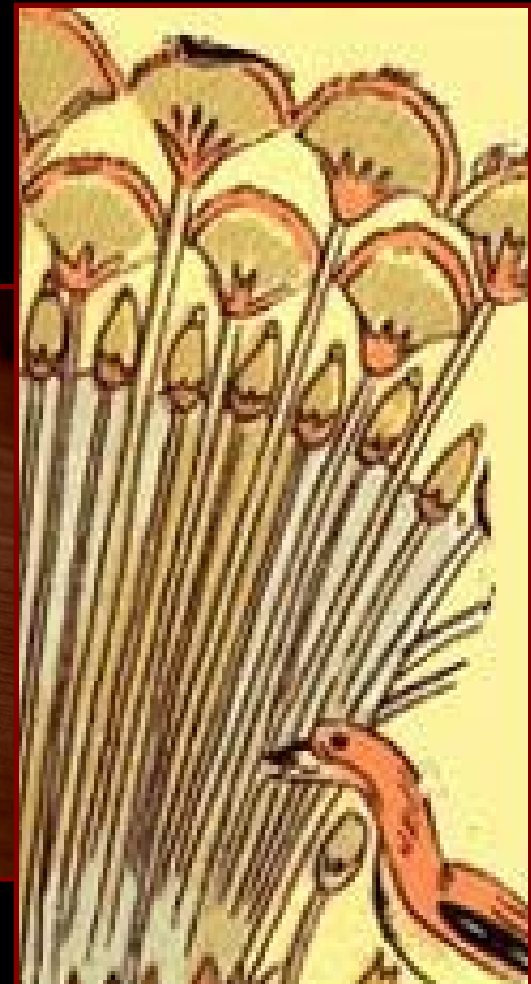
The NT Canon

- What is a "canon"?

The NT Canon

- What is a "canon"?
- How did the canon develop?

The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)

The Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
  - Informal use of writings
  - Growth of reliable collections
  - Writings begin to be considered "scripture"

Ignatius, *To the Smyrneans,* 7.2

- They abstain from Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins . . . It is right to refrain from such men and not even to speak about them in private or in public, but to give heed to the prophets and especially to the Gospel, in which the Passion has been revealed to us and the Resurrection has been accomplished. . .
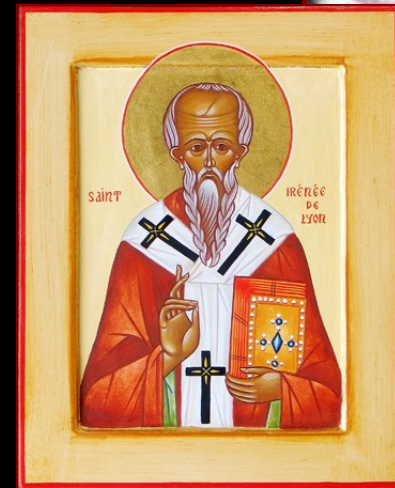
2 Peter 3:15-16

- So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.
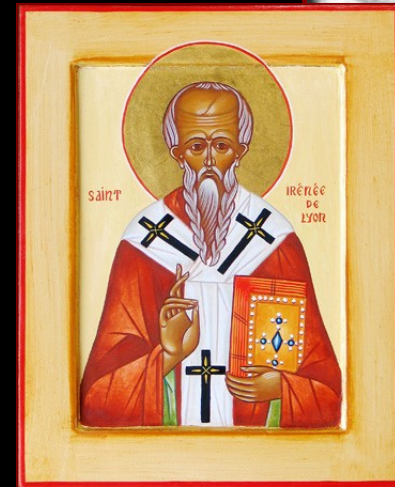
The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
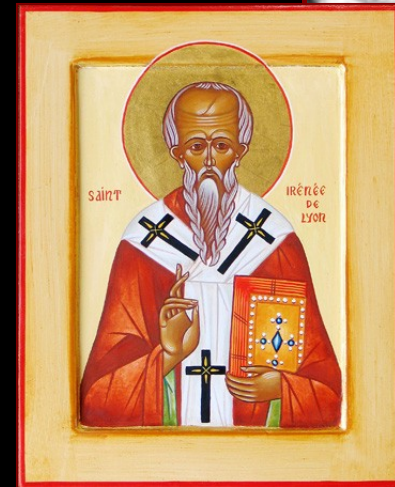- Developing consensus (140-300s)

The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
- Developing consensus (140-300s)
  - Pressure of heresy
  - Bishops advise their churches
  - Idea of a single collection (NT)

The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
- Developing consensus (140-300s)
  - Which books?

– Clearly in (by 200 AD)

- 4 gospels
- Paul's letters (initially not Pastorals)
- Acts
- 1 Peter
- 1 John

– Debated (finally accepted)

- Hebrews, Revelation, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, James, Jude
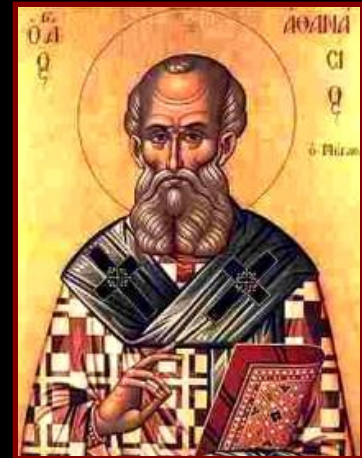
– Clearly out

- Gnostic writings (Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Mary, etc.)

– Debated (finally excluded)

- Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache, Revelation of Peter, Gospel of the Egyptians, Acts of Paul, Letter to the Laodiceans, Etc.

The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
- Developing consensus (140-300s)
- Formalizing the consensus (300s on)

The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
- Developing consensus (140-300s)
- Formalizing the consensus (300s on)
  - 4th century councils
  - Council of Florence (1439-1443)
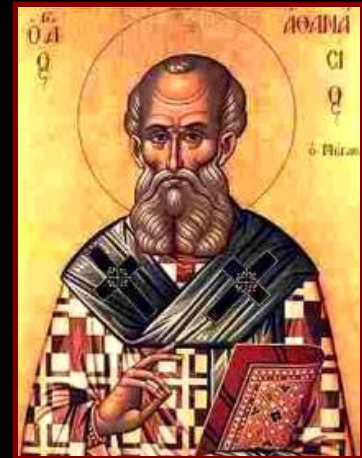
The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
- Developing consensus (140-300s)
- Formalizing the consensus (300s on)
- Questioning the consensus (16th cent.)

The NT Canon

- Early beginnings (to ca. 140)
- Developing consensus (140-300s)
- Formalizing the consensus (300s on)
- Questioning the consensus (16th cent.)
  - Renaissance scholars
  - Reformers
  - Council of Trent

The NT Canon

- How did they choose?
  - Criteria in the early church
  - Criteria in renaissance/reformation

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  - Criteria in the early church
    - Early public reading
    - Apostolic authorship (flexible)
    - Contents fit the "Rule of Faith"
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- How did they choose?
  - Criteria in the early church
    - Early public reading
    - Apostolic authorship (flexible)
    - Contents fit the "Rule of Faith"
  - Criteria in renaissance/reformation
    - Same historical criteria
    - Contents "promote Christ" (Luther)
    - Inner testimony of Spirit (Calvin)

The Canon

- What is the NT canon?
  - The collection of books which
    - Were agreed on by a broad and informal consensus over the first 3 centuries of Christianity
    - Convey the understanding of Jesus' life and significance taught by the Apostles and their co-workers in the first generation
    - Acts as a reliable guide for faith and life
  - Recognized to be "catholic," "apostolic," and "holy"

Inspiration and Revelation

- The "word of God", "inspired"
- Why would we believe it?

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  - Human writings
  - Yet God-breathed (θεοπνεύστος)
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- The "word of God", "inspired"
  - Human writings
  - Yet God-breathed (θεοπνεύστος)
- Why would we believe it?
  - Jesus as God's self-revelation
  - NT texts mediate that revelation
  - God is a good communicator
  - The Spirit was involved

Inspiration and Revelation

- Jesus as God's "Word" (vocal chords)

Inspiration and Revelation

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- Apostolic community as the medium (air)

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Inspiration and Revelation

- Jesus as God's "Word" (vocal chords)
- Apostolic community as medium (air)
- NT conveys apostolic teaching (loudspeaker)
- God's voice heard in entirely human texts