

# FOUNDATIONS

HISTORY, HERITAGE, DOCTRINE





you didn't have the strength to labe one more  
all this way several times, but looking back, on  
school, a husband and a father of two. This would  
his fourth surgery due to kidney problems.

ards of the four medical procedures, my wife  
body would jerk, and he would cry for  
er due shortly, I waited impatiently for  
split. The doctors thought it wasn't  
think I can handle my son having the

an issue beyond his own strength  
My power is made perfect in weakness  
are hard we have a tendency to feel the words of  
d. We must trust that His hand will carry us, and His strength will not

the wall with its many holes. The bricks are made of a mix of red and grey, and the mortar is a light, textured grey. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights, giving the scene a somber and textured appearance. The holes in the wall are of various shapes and sizes, some of which are quite large and irregular. The overall mood is one of resilience and hope amidst adversity.

# Week 4

## Easily Off Track

### Foundations

Error never shows itself in its naked reality, in order not to be discovered. On the contrary, it dresses elegantly, so that the unwary may be led to believe that it is more truthful than truth itself.

Irenaeus of Lyons

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the facts

- Many false doctrines begin to pop up throughout the region.
- This led to a formalization of doctrine, beliefs and systematic theology.

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Modalism

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts



# WHAT IS MODALISM?

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Modalism
- also called Sabellianism
- the unorthodox belief that God is one person who has revealed himself in three forms or *modes* in contrast to the Trinitarian doctrine where God is one being eternally existing in three persons.



# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Modalism
- during the incarnation, Jesus was simply God acting in one mode or role, and the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was God acting in a different mode. Thus, God does not exist as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the same time. Rather, He is one person and has merely manifested himself in these three modes at various times. Modalism thus denies the basic distinctiveness and coexistence of the three persons of the Trinity.

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Modalism
- Condemned by Tertullian
- Also known as *Sabellianism*, it was condemned as heresy by Dionysius, bishop of Rome (c. 262).

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Modalism
- probably the most common theological error concerning the nature of God (i.e., who God is).
- "Present day" groups that hold to forms of this error are the United Pentecostal and United Apostolic Churches. They deny the Trinity, teach that the name of God is Jesus... modalist churches often accuse Trinitarians of teaching three gods.
- There is question whether Steven Furtick is a Modalist

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Gnosticism

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts



# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Gnosticism
- made up of a diverse set of beliefs.
- It is the teaching based on the idea of *gnosis* (a Koine Greek word meaning "secret knowledge"), or knowledge of transcendence arrived at by way of internal, intuitive means.
- While Gnosticism thus relies on personal religious experience as its primary authority, early "Christian" Gnostics did adopt their own versions of authoritative Scriptures, such as those found at *Nag Hammadi* in Egypt.

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Gnosticism
- Nag Hammadi is a town in Upper Egypt near ancient Chenoboskion and 13 codices were discovered about 1945.
- Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen wrote about the Gnostics

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Gnosticism
- Gnostics believed that matter, whether it be the physical universe or the humanly body, is evil.
- God is wholly transcendent, that is, he is far removed from his creation. He did not create the material universe because it was instead created by an evil or lesser God, sometimes called a "demiurge". God is thus too perfect and pure to have much to do with the evilness of the material universe.



# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Gnosticism
- Gnostics believed that human beings were "sparks" or "droplets" of the very same spiritual substance (or essence) that God is.
- Gnosticism commonly held that "salvation is to escape from the bondage of the material existence and travel back to the home from which souls/spirits have fallen."
- Gnostics considered themselves Christians and saw Jesus as a heavenly messenger. However, they rejected the idea of God becoming incarnate (God becoming a man), dying and rising bodily. "These beliefs were considered unspiritual and against true wisdom because they entangled spirit with matter." Most Gnostics believe that whoever entered Jesus at his baptism left him before he died on the cross.

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Gnosticism
- This heretical view is still in existence today, both in various secretive cults and in such pop religious movements as astrology or alchemy.
- The Masonic movement has been referred to as a Gnostic movement. The popular book *The Da Vinci Code* (2003, Doubleday) by Dan Brown promotes Gnostic ideas as it attempts to undermine orthodox Christianity.

# Easily Off Track

## Twisting the Facts

- Marcionism
- Early heresy led by Marcion, who proposed the first canon of Christian texts.
- The proposed canon consisted of the Gospel of Luke and several of Paul's epistles; however, Marcion edited the writings by deleting any references that appeared to approve of the Old Testament and the creator God of the Jews.
- Marcionism thus rejected the Old Testament God, claiming that Jesus represented the true sovereign God who was different from the God of the Hebrew people.

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- The Canon of Scripture
- Athanasius, in response to Marcionism, recommended that the Church approve the 27 books which comprise the Christian New Testament.
- There was no question, except among Gnostics and Marcionites that the Hebrew Scriptures were part of the Christian canon.
- The formation of the canon was not done formally, through a council or special meeting but a consensus developed gradually.

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- The Gospels were the first to attain general recognition.
- The inconsistencies among the four Gospels were quickly pointed out.
- The early Christians knew of these differences and insisted on using the 4 instead of one in direct response to Marcion and the Gnostics.
- There were hundreds of Gospels during this time but many were what could be considered Gnostic Gospels

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- Creeds
- Used particularly in baptism
- The church in each city had its own creedal formula

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- The Apostles Creed
- Put together around 150 AD
- This creed is aimed at Marcion and the Gnostics
- Baptismal Creed of Caesarea
- Nicene Creed (Nicene-Constantinople Creed)

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- Apostolic Succession
- If Jesus had some secret knowledge to communicate to his disciples—which in fact he did not—he would have entrusted that teaching to the same apostles to whom he entrusted the churches.
- If they had received any such teaching they would have in turn passed it on to those who would follow them in leadership.
- The argument is that this teaching would be found among the direct disciples of the apostles and the successors of those disciples, the bishops.
- All who would know this knowledge, denied its existence.
- This proves the Gnostic claim of secret teaching to be false.



# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- Apostolic Succession
- Later on, Apostolic Succession was carried further.
- Any ordination was valid only if performed by a bishop who could claim direct apostolic succession.
- This principle of apostolic succession was inclusive rather than exclusive, which was opposite the Gnostic teachers.
- It offered an open and shared tradition that based its claim, not on a single favorite disciple of Jesus, but on the witness of all the apostles and of the churches founded by them.

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- Ancient Catholic Church
- A prospective bishop would send a statement of faith to neighboring bishops who would participate in the consecration of their new colleague to validate his orthodoxy.
- This led to an episcopal collegiality, or the Catholic Church.

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- Ancient Catholic Church
- Catholic means “universal,” or “according to the whole.”
- To separate itself from the various heretical groups and sects, the ancient church began to call itself “Catholic.”
- It underscored both its universality and the inclusiveness of the witness on which it stood.
- It was the church “according to the whole.” The Total witness of all the apostles and the evangelists.

# The Response

## Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

- Ancient Catholic Church
- Only the Church Catholic, the church “according to the whole,” could lay claim to the entire apostolic witness.
- This was the warranty of the church’s orthodoxy which is why “Catholic,” became a synonym for “correct teaching.”
- Later on, after many centuries, debates regarding the true meaning of *catholic* centered on the person and authority of a single apostle — Petros, or Peter.