

1. An Apostolic Church

1. The NT Witness to the Apostolic Character of the Church

Acts 2:42 and the Apostles' Teaching and Fellowship

2. The Early Christian Witness to the Apostolic Character of the Church

How do you find the true church if you don't have the New Testament to guide you?

3. Irenaeus and the Meaning of Apostolic Tradition

But as God's creature, the sun, is one and the same in the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and illumines all men who wish to come to a knowledge of the truth. Neither will one of those who preside in the churches who is very powerful in speech say anything different from these things, for no one is above his teacher, nor will one who is weak in speech diminish the tradition. (Against Heresies 1.10.2)

We learned the plan of our salvation from no others than from those through whom the gospel first came to us. They first preached it abroad, and then later by the will of God handed it down to us in Writings, to be the foundation and pillar of our faith. (3.1.1)

But when we appeal again to that tradition which has come down from the apostles and is guarded by the successions of elders in the churches, they oppose the tradition, saying that they are wiser not only than the elders, but even than the apostles, and have found the genuine truth. (3.2.2)

The tradition of the apostles, made clear in all the world, can be clearly seen in every church by those who wish to behold the truth. We can enumerate those who were established by the apostles as bishops in the churches, and their successors down to our time, none of whom taught or thought of anything like their mad ideas....Even if the apostles had known of hidden mysteries, which they taught to the perfect secretly and apart from others, they would have handed them down especially to those to whom they were entrusting the churches themselves. (3.3.1)

The Catholic Catechism says that *this living transmission* [of the apostolic tradition] *is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it* (78).

4. Reformed Teaching on Apostolic Succession

The Second Helvetic Confession states that Jesus is:

the most perfect teacher of the world; in whom is hidden the wisdom of God, and which has come to us through the most holy, simple, and most perfect doctrine of all. For he chose disciples for himself whom he made apostles. These went out into the whole world, and everywhere gathered together churches by the preaching of the Gospel, and then throughout all the churches in the world they appointed pastors or teachers according to Christ's command; through their successors he has taught and governed the Church unto this day. (18)