

Apostles and Apostolicity in Catholic Thought From Beginnings to Pre-Vatican II

Dr John Gresham

Outline

- I. Who were apostles?
 - A. Singular
 1. Origin/foundation of Church: Bridge between Jesus and subsequent church history
 2. God > Jesus > Apostles > Bishops (1 Clement 42)
 - B. Specific
 1. Peter the Prince of Apostles
 2. Peter and Paul – Chief Apostles
 3. The Twelve
- II. Apostles in Art, Legend, and Theology
 - A. Art
 1. traditio legis
 2. traditio clavium
 - B. Legend
 1. Legendary origin of Apostles Creed
 - C. Theology
 1. Thomas Aquinas on Apostles
 - a) Christ the principal apostle- the twelve secondary apostles
 - b) Greatest of saints, ranked after Christ and Mary
 - c) Uniquely gifted – holiness, knowledge, miracles
 - d) First instructors of the church orally and in writing
 - e) Appointed Bishops as their successors

III. Apostolicity

A. Apostolicity as Antidote to Heresy: Irenaeus vs Gnostics (2nd Century)

1. Who was Irenaeus?
 - a) Early Bishop (John>Polycarp>Apostle John)
 - b) First systematic/biblical theologian
 - c) Witness to continuation of charismatic gifts
2. Who were Gnostics?
 - a) New Age Movement – salvation by higher consciousness (gnosis)
 - b) Modernist Movement – adaptation to contemporary philosophy
 - c) Antisemitic Movement – rejection of Old Testament/Jewish roots
3. Apostolic answer to Gnostic Heresy
 - a) Apostolic Origin vs Recent Origin
 - b) Apostolic Writings vs Gnostic writings (4 gospels vs gnostic gospels)
 - c) Apostolic Teaching/Tradition (Rule of Faith) vs Gnostic secret traditions
 - d) Apostolic Succession vs Heretical lineage of gnostics
4. Catholic 3-legged stool
 - a) Irenaeus: Apostolic Writings/Apostolic Tradition/Apostolic Succession
 - b) Catholic Catechesis: Scripture/Tradition/Magisterium

B. Apostolicity as antidote to Schism: Francis de Sales vs Reformers (16-17th c.)

1. Who was Francis De Sales?
 - a) Bishop of Calvinist Geneva
 - b) Counter Reformation Apologist – *Catholic Controversy*
 - c) Promoter of lay spirituality – *Call to Devout Life*
2. De Sales First Critique of Protestant claims
 - a) Who authorized Protestant reformers as “ambassadors” of Christ?
 - b) Immediate vs Mediated authority
 - c) Apologetic use of miracles

- C. Apostolicity as Antidote to Modernity: Popes vs Modern World (19th Century)
1. *Syllabus of Errors* (Pius IX, 1864)
 - a) Condemnation of modern intellectual and political movements.
 - b) Reassertion of Papal authority
 2. Vatican I (1869-70)
 - a) Definition of Papal Teaching Authority
 - b) An unfinished council: Apostolic succession of bishops eclipsed by Petrine succession of Pope
 3. Question of Anglican Orders
 - a) *Apostolicae Curae* (Leo XIII, 1896)
 - b) Defining apostolic succession canonically
 4. Looking ahead:
 - a) Need for positive engagement with modern world
 - b) Need to clarify role of bishops as successors of apostles
 - c) Need for broader understanding of apostolic succession