

## STUDY PAK 5

### APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

#### I. ROLE OF THE APOSTLES

- A. The Scriptures are clear concerning the role of the apostles as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and as \_\_\_\_\_  
– Hebrews 2:3-4; I John 1:1-2; II Peter 1:16-18, II Corinthians 12:12;  
II Thessalonians 3:6; Jude 3; II Timothy 2:2.
- B. The Apostles created \_\_\_\_\_ which could  
not be added in any way.
1. They appealed to the miracles and resurrection of Christ and to their own  
miracles as \_\_\_\_\_ – Hebrews 2:3-4.
  2. A closed system of doctrine was created to provide \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ – II Thessalonians 3:6; Jude 3;  
II Timothy 2:2; Ephesians 2:20.
- C. The early church acknowledged the unique role of the apostles.
1. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-100)  
“The apostles have preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ;  
Jesus Christ (has done so) from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by  
God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were  
made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore  
received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our  
Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the Word of God, with full assurance  
of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God  
was at hand.”
  2. Ignatius (Second Century)
    - a. “Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and  
the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever ye do, may prosper...”
    - b. “I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They  
were apostles of Jesus Christ, but I am the very least (of  
believers)....”

3. Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202)

- a. Irenaeus wrote for the purpose of preserving the church from corruption. His most famous work is “Against Heresies”.
- b. He confirmed the closed doctrine of the apostles.

“But in this, the third book, I shall adduce proof from the scriptures, so that I may come behind in nothing of what thou hast enjoined; yea, that over and above what thou didst reckon upon, thou mayest receive from me the means of combating and vanquishing those who, in whatever manner, are propagating falsehood. For the love of God, being rich and ungrudging, confers upon the suppliant more than he can ask from it. Call to mind, then, the things which I have stated in the two previous books, and taking these in connection with them, thou shalt have from me a very copious refutation of all heretics; and faithfully and strenuously shalt thou resist them in defense of the only true and life-giving faith, which the Church has received from the apostles and imparted to her sons. For the Lord of all gave to His apostles the power of the Gospel, through whom also we have known the truth, that is, the doctrine of the Son of God; to whom also did the Lord declare: “He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and Him that sent Me.”

- c. He used the authority of the apostles \_\_\_\_\_.

“But again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, (and) which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth.”

- d. Irenaeus had been taught by Polycarp, who had been taught by John the Apostle.

“But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried (on earth) a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down and which \_\_\_\_\_ are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those

men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time, - a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the Heretics. He it was also who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus, caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ truth from the apostles.

- e. He made it clear that apostolic authority was only to be identified with the Scriptures.
1. “Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man (depositing his money) in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth:”
  2. “Since therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which then recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, and no lie is in Him.”
  3. He also made it clear that the apostolic closed system of doctrine was \_\_\_\_\_.

“Now all these (heretics) are of much later date than the bishops to whom the apostles committed the churches; which fact I have in the third book taken all pains to demonstrate. It follows, then, as a matter of course that these heretics aforementioned, since they are blind to the truth, and deviate from the (right) way, will walk in various roads; and therefore the footsteps of their doctrine are scattered here and there without agreement of connection. But the path of those belonging to the Church circumscribes the whole world, as possessing the sure tradition from the apostles, and give unto us to see the faith is one and the same, since all receive one and the same God the Father, and believes in the same dispensation regarding the incarnation of the Son of God, and are cognizant of the same gift of the Spirit, and are conversant with the same commandments, and preserve the same form of ecclesiastical constitution, and preserve the same advent of the Lord, and await the same salvation of the complete

man, that is, of the soul and body. And undoubtedly the preaching of the church is true and steadfast, in which one and the same way of salvation is shown throughout the whole world. For to her is intrusted the light of God; and therefore the “wisdom” of God...”

### III. THE APOSTLES AND THE SCRIPTURES

*The Cambridge History of the Bible* p. 284-285) sums up the relationship between Orthodox Christian doctrine, the canon of Scripture and the apostles.

“The Canon of the New Testament was the result of a long and gradual process in the course of which the books regarded as authoritative, inspired, and apostolic were selected out of a much larger body of literature. Such a process of selection necessarily involved both selectors and grounds on which the selection would be made...Only in the late second century does it become clear that such leaders as Irenaeus of Lyons and Serapion of Antioch are consciously discussing questions of canon, and when they do they are relying primarily on older church traditions....Selection thus involved not only comparison among books but also comparison with a \_\_\_\_\_ viewed as relatively fixed. Before this norm, among early Christians regarded as the faith of the apostles, reached a relative fixity of expression it was not possible for a definite Canon to come into existence. About A.D. 170, when opponents of the enthusiastic movement known as Montanism endeavored to cut the ground from under it by rejecting the Gospel and Revelation of John, their own theological ideas had not incorporated Johannine insights, and their rejection of the Johannine books was destined THIS IS TO SAY THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY WERE CLOSELY INTERRELATED, AND SUPPORTED ONE ANOTHER...The question of canonicity or to put it more historically, authority – since the term “canon” was not used until the fourth century – did not and could not arise until the idea of the \_\_\_\_\_ had clearly arisen out the second century anti-gnostic debates.”