

Why is apostolicity the right principle for determining what is formally normative for Christian witness and theology?

Apostolicity is the right principle for determining what is formally normative for Christian witness and theology for two main reasons: (1) because Christian faith and witness as such are apostolic; and (2) because Jesus himself is not an apostle, but rather the explicit primal ontic source of everything apostolic, formally as well as substantially?

To be a Christian is either to *be* an apostle or to believe and witness *with* the apostles, through, and in substantial agreement with, their faith and witness. In this sense, or for this reason, Christian faith and witness as such are apostolic.

Jesus himself, however, is not merely an apostle, not even *the* apostle, but rather the explicit primal ontic source authorizing all that is properly said to be apostolic. But, then, the so-called historical Jesus, which is the only other possible principle for determining what is formally normative Christian witness, cannot be the right principle for doing this. For to make Jesus himself formally normative would be, in effect, to make him an apostle, even if *the* apostle, and this he cannot possibly be made to be consistently with his unique role as the explicit primal ontic source of all apostolic faith and witness.

1 June 1990; rev. 22 September 2002