

What is "apostolic" witness?

What does it mean to say that a witness is directly, or immediately, authorized by Christ, as distinct from being indirectly, or mediately, authorized by him?

It means that the witness in question is the witness by the critical interpretation of which one discovers the explicit primal source of authority, by which all authorities, including, first of all, this very witness, are authorized. In other words, a witness is directly, or immediately, authorized by Christ if it is the witness taken to be the primary authority for determining what Christ means.

Of course, the only witness that can be properly so taken is the earliest witness accessible to us. On the other hand, its being the earliest witness accessible to us is the sufficient as well as the necessary condition of its being the witness directly, or immediately, authorized by Christ, and hence the apostolic witness.

Unless I'm mistaken, what I have here worked out is simply what "apostolicity" has always been taken to mean--or, better, what "apostolicity" has, in fact, always meant, given the methods and knowledge then and there obtaining. That has been understood to be "apostolic" which: (1) preaches Christ; and (2) does so originally and originatingly, constitutively, and hence is the earliest preaching. But, of course, what preaching is taken to be earliest is a function of the methods of determining such things available in the situation, so that "original," "earliest," etc. always express a necessary relativity to such methods and the knowledge they make possible.