

Further grounds for this authority may be seen in passages such as 2 Thessalonians 3:14. It is not hard to understand how great authority status was given to the Apostles and why the later concept of apostolic tradition became so binding.

b. Prophets

We know less of these than we would like to know but the Didache, etc., give us some insight to their ministry and the expectations given them by the early Christian community. Some reference may be found in Ephesians 2:20 although there is not unanimous agreement on who the "prophets" in the passage are. While modern writers view the prophets of 1 Cor 14 as more or less teachers, it becomes plain in our ancient literature that they sometimes fulfilled a service which purportedly informed others of the Lord's will.

c. Bishops

Successors to the Apostles and prophets, the bishops (pastors, if you will) became the administrative heads of local congregations. Ignatius is very bold in calling for obedience of the local company to the bishop and the thrust that is given him in seed form is later heavily developed by Cyprian, et al. There was a great parity of bishops but their authority status in the community is very pronounced. No doubt the problems mentioned in C-1-a helped in the promotion of the bishopric office.

We are not surprised to find how quickly the authority value of men grew in the early church. Seen as spokesmen for God, the givers of Scripture and their contemporary preachers had a status of considerable strength in the early church and their opinions did much to form the polity and practice of those days.

3. The Authority of Reason

The early church was not afraid to reason for its faith and existence. It seemed to think that if one could think and master proper logic, one would see the realistic side of Christianity and its final plausibility.

The apologists argued for what may be called the "fundamental articles of religion." From what they knew of life and the world they argued for the Being, Unity, and Spiritual character of God, His creation, and the world's subsequent dependence on Him, His administration and providence over the present created world, His moral law, and our accountability. They did not discard Scripture in this but they began on the concept of thinking that reasonable men had to accept the reality of a being beyond themselves. For this reason some have criticised