

## St Irenaeus “Against the Heresies” – Resource Sheet 51

But, again, when we refer [the Gnostics] to that tradition which originates from the apostles, which is preserved by means of the succession of elders in the churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the elders, but even than the apostles. (Against Heresies III:2:2)

For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to "the perfect" apart from and privately from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the churches themselves. For they wanted these men to be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon, but if they should fall away, the direst calamity. (Against Heresies III:3:1)

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 ... [He] departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time ... Then again, the church in Ephesus, founded by Paul and having John remaining with them permanently until the times of Trajan *began his reign in A.D. 98*], is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles. (Against Heresies III:3:4)

*Note: St Irenaeus was taught by Hieromartyr Polycarp who was himself taught by St John the Theologian, disciple of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ).*

the Church is everywhere consistent, continues in an even course, and receives testimony from the prophets, the apostles, and all the disciples through [those in] the beginning, the middle, the end, and through the entire dispensation of God. And that well-grounded system which tends to man's salvation, namely, our faith, which we have received from the Church, we do preserve, and [that faith] always, by the Spirit of God, renews its youth, as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel, and causes the vessel itself containing it to renew its youth also. For this gift of God has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all the members may receive it and live. (Against Heresies III:24:1)

**TASK: What arguments does St Irenaeus use to expose the falsehoods taught by heretics?**