

E. Formative Voices of Theological Position

In passing to the body of our work, it is important to have a brief survey of the more basic voices in placing theological doctrinal studies in motion. My notes are in fragment form and will likely be filled in by later editions of the syllabus. These are persons and things with which you should be familiar and we sketch them briefly.

1. The Scriptures

Particularly observe how they are used to express doctrine in the context of Acts 15.

The chief problem is the time taken to write and recognize the New Testament Canon.

2. The Apostolic Fathers

The term describes a group of writers and writings that are at least rooted in the Apostolic age. Some of the materials are of dubious age and authorship but they have been in this classification for a long time. With a brief note for identification they are:

a. The Letter of Barnabas

From the early or middle second century, this ms offers some insight into the interpretation of the Old Testament and shows the growth of the allegorical method. It also contains more of the "do and don't" categories that are so popular in the earlier literature of the church. The stress in Barnabas is on the more positive side, however. The letter went through canonical disputation and is found in some of the older NT mss. Barnabas makes many citations of Scripture and gives evidence of the continuing company philosophy with which the early church viewed itself. It should not be confused with a later epistle or monograph written by a man who converted to Islam and included portions of the Koran--probably in the later middle ages.

b. The Shepherd of Hermas

This is a pastoral work by Hermas, an early Christian mystic in or around Rome about the close of the first century. The work is one of visions and discussions with angels and heavenly emissaries. It is chiefly directed against the problem of sin and the overall thrust is that post-baptismal sin is ruinous. Some have associated the name Hermas with the reference in Romans 16:14 but this seems doubtful to me. It is an unique book and again went through much discussion as to its character before it was completely set aside as a non-inspired