

II.2.e
Apostolic
Literature

Literature of the Apostolic Age

The age of our study did not lack for literary efforts. In spite of printing problems, etc., there was plenty of literature. Much of it is in the form of letters and storied accounts. Some of it is written after the fact traditionally. But the chief literature as it affects our work is as follows:

The Scripture: It is the main spiritual product of the age and the only guide as to what God wanted for his church. It records the early growth of the church in sketchy form and gives the literary definitions for what will come. We have noted the problem of the canon but when resolved, it gave the church a text of great reliability which is our key to understanding the work of God.

The Apostolic Fathers: This name is given to a bulk of literature dating from this period. Included are the following works and you will find that the term "fathers" applies both to the works and to the authorial parties.

1) The Doctrina: A short summary of Apostolic belief with no certain date of origin but certainly no later than the first half of the second century. It is the earliest of all such formulations and gives a brief summary on what will be a major theme in these writings: the ways of life and death.

2) The Didache: Another summary of Apostolic teaching that may be dependent on the Doctrina or at least was aware of its content. It shows the development of tradition, formalism, and legal methods to counter undesired trends in the church. You will learn from it that both the problems and the answers have changed little over the years. The Didache is written in very simple Greek...and if I say it is easy Greek...it is easy Greek!

These two documents precede the "Apostle's Creed" and the "Apostolic Constitutions". The former becomes a popular affirmation of faith while the latter involves both early and later materials on church government, practice and ideals.

3) The Letters of Clement: Bishop of Rome about 90 AD, Clement addressed his first letter to "the Corinthians" and wrote it in a Pauline style. It is generally recognized as the oldest extra-