

II.3 Church
LeadersLEADERS OF THE CHURCH; APOSTOLIC AGE

1) The Apostles:

Naturally you know who they are and can give them by name. With the exception of John the personal apostolic histories are not well documented. John is the only one who did not die a martyr's death, we are told, and lived to a very good old age in and around Ephesus. Tradition has all the other apostles dying a martyr's death in different places and most of the traditions are not well founded. Thomas is an exception to this in that there is plenty of evidence that he went east into India and perhaps as far as Burma but the facts of his life are obscure.

2) The early Fathers:

The term "father" is used in the sense in which Paul used it in the Corinthians letters when he referred to himself as a father of the Corinthian Christian community. It is not used as it is given in the Roman communion today. The chief early fathers are:

Clement

Ignatius

Papias

Polycarp

of whom we have said a little when we discussed the writings known as the Apostolic fathers. Reading the notes on them in Schaaf-Hertzog: ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE will prove helpful as will the consultation of any of the biographical dictionaries of the church.

Our course will pay a good deal of attention to biography as we go and you will remember that historians often interpret the lives of people in the light of what they wish they were more than in the fact of what they are. Keep your eyes open for the people who move and shake the societal order for the Gospel's sake.. you will find them an interesting, unusual, unpredictable, and erratic bunch. The one thing they will all have in common is great commitment to the truth as they conceive it.