

The collapse of Doctrine

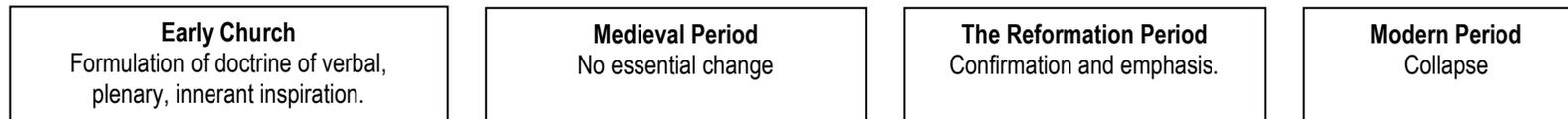
Introduction

This is a simple schematic study to demonstrate the collapse of Biblical doctrine in the modern period.

The time periods will be defined as:

1. *The Early Church*: the apostolic age, the sub apostolic age and the period of the church fathers up to 600.
2. *The Medieval Period*: the Dark Ages (from about 600) and the Middle Ages including the Renaissance up to 1517.
3. *The Reformation Period*: From 1517 onwards, the Magisterial Reformers, plus the scholastic period afterwards up to 1750.
4. *The Modern Period*: from 1750 (The Enlightenment) to the present day.

The Inspiration of the Bible

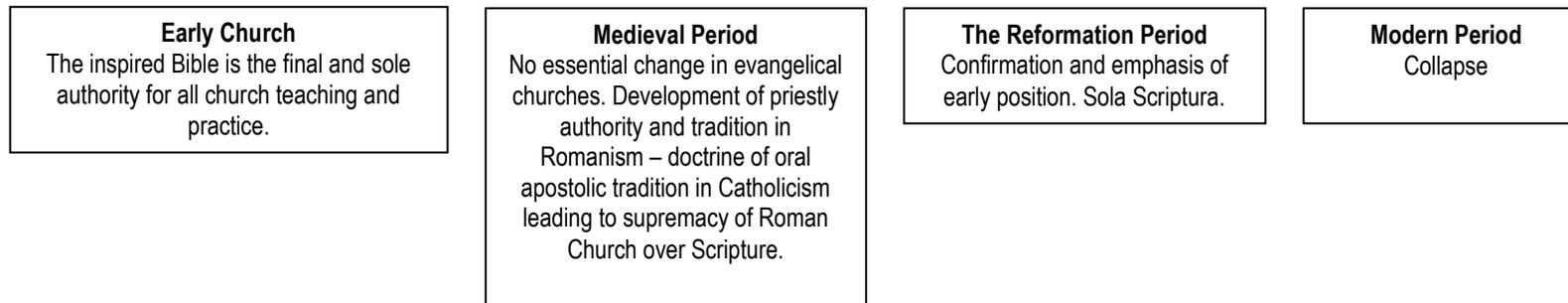


Details of Modern Period

- Sceptics (mainly Deists, e.g. Edward Herbert, Matthew Tindal, Anthony Collins) – denial of the supernatural, thus relegation of miracles to myths; emphasis on the human writers.
- Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834, German theologian) – denial of inspiration but emphasises interaction with Christ. Also Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893, English theologian) and others. Beginnings of liberalism.
- Higher Criticism (e.g. Julius Wellhausen, 1844-1918 – denial of authenticity of many OT books); Form Criticism (e.g. Rudolph Bultmann, 1884-1976 - Bible books are late and based on oral traditions); rationalism and liberalism (or Modernism; e.g. CH Dodd, 1884-1973). Emphasis upon human writers, evolutionary development of writing and presence of errors in Scripture.
- Reformed theologians sought to defend the Scriptural position, such as BB Warfield. Cross-party evangelicals also defended inspired Scripture, such as the authors of *'The Fundamentals'* (which led to the term 'Fundamentalism'). After WWII many of these liberal ideas faded away as painstakingly better studies and new archaeological evidence affirmed the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible, especially its ancient origin.

- Neo-Orthodoxy - Karl Barth (1886-1968, Swiss Theologian) – Scripture becomes merely the ‘witness of divine revelation’ not the actual revelation. God’s word becomes such only by a subjective experience of it. Attempt to elevate subjective experience of divine activity instead of objective reality of the divine in the written word. Emil Brunner (1889-1966, Swiss Theologian) – denied verbal inspiration.
- Charismatic Movement – relegation of the Bible to a lesser authority; inspiration focused on prophetic words.

The authority of the Bible



Details of Modern Period – heresies revolve around the greater authority of man.

- Liberals emphasise ‘errors’ in Scripture, based upon uninspired human writing, and thus hold that the Bible is just a piece of literature with no authority over morals. Authority resides in human reason.
- Church tradition supersedes Scripture in many institutional bodies; especially the laws of synods.
- Papal infallibility formalised in Romanism at the First Vatican Council of 1870. Thus the authorisation of unbiblical doctrines by papal decree, such as: the assumption of Mary (1950) or Mary as Mediatrix (Vatican II).
- Evolutionary theory destroys the authority of Genesis 1-3, but this also affects many other passages and doctrines.
- Further impact of Schleiermacher, Neo-Orthodoxy and Higher Critical views. For example, Brunner teaches that there is no formal authority in the words of Scripture, authority lies in Christ and my subjective fellowship with him, which supports Scripture.
- Charismatics uphold the superior value of subjective feelings and the words of prophets. The authority of Scripture is either completely denied or ignored in practice.
- Moral revolution of late 20th century, especially regarding homosexuality, destroys the authority of Scripture in those bodies that follow this trend.
- Reformed evangelicals tried to countermand these capitulations (such as EJ Young, Charles Hodge, BB Warfield, JI Packer and M Lloyd-Jones).

The doctrine of Scripture is the vital foundation for the formulation and defence of all other doctrines. If this foundation is compromised then all doctrines will be affected. This denial or ignorance of Scripture is the reason why the modern period has so many heresies and aberrant practices present. Lack of respect for the divine origin and revelation in the Bible is the besetting sin of modern churches.

The Trinity

Early Church

God is one being subsisting in three equal persons of one substance.

Sub apostolic age

Arianism denies Christ as eternal Son and the Holy Spirit.

Modalism (Sabellianism or Modalistic Monarchianism) states that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three modes of operation of the one God.

[‘Monarchianism’ = ‘one ruler’.]

Adoptionism (Dynamic Monarchianism) [a type of Modalism] states that Jesus was a mere man until adopted by God as his son.

Gnostics make God of OT less than the Supreme Being and evil since he created evil matter.

Ebionism: Jesus is not divine.

Marcion: OT God is different from the NT God; Jesus is not divine.

Montanists were Modalists.

Medieval Period

No significant change.

Modalism, Arianism, and other heresies, condemned and fade out. Gnosticism gradually dies out.

The Reformation Period

Socinianism worse than Arianism and denies Christ had existence prior to his birth. Also denies Holy Spirit.

Modern Period

Collapse. Oneness Pentecostalism denies the Trinity adopting a form of Modalism. Develops a doctrine of the name of Jesus and rebaptises converts in the name of Jesus only.

Socinianism starts in London in 1774.

Unitarians start in 1773 in London and in 1710 in USA. It denied the whole Trinity and Scripture and was universalistic.

Christadelphians deny Christ as Son and the personality of the Spirit.

JWs deny Christ is God.

Christadelphians, JWs and Unitarians are Adoptionist heretics & Arians.

Mormons state that Adam is God the Father; Jesus is subordinate.

Swedenborg & Schleiermacher – Modalistic Monarchianism.

Process Theology states that God is the universe (Pantheism), Christ is not God.

Christian Science is Gnostic, pantheistic (monist); Christ is not God, personality of the Spirit denied; denies Trinity.

Unification Church (Moonies) deny Trinity; God is a masculine & feminine energy; Jesus is not God; denies personality of the Holy Spirit..

Eternal Sonship of Christ

Early Church

Christ is, and has always been, the eternal Son. The 1st person of the Trinity cannot be the Father without the Son. Christ is eternally begotten (not made).

Medieval Period

No significant change.

The Reformation Period

Affirmation of early position.
Socinianism.

Modern Period

Collapse. Socinianism in England denies Christ is God and substitutionary atonement. Modern 'Neo-Theism' (Openness Theology) is a revival of this. Some Baptists also challenged eternal sonship in the 19th c. John MacArthur denied it in his commentary on Hebrews and his Study Bible, though he eventually recanted in 1999 (after much pressure). However, his printed works still contain this.

God as Creator

Early Church

Earth created out of nothing, in six literal days, by God for his good purposes. Man is the crown of God's creation.

Medieval Period

No significant change.

The Reformation Period

No significant change.

Modern Period

Collapse. Rise and acceptance of Darwinian evolutionary theory, based on earlier theories. Creationism at first challenged and then superseded by evolution. Catastrophism (e.g. global flood) replaced by gradualism. Evolution then taught as fact in education system. Some churches adopt 'theistic evolution' as a compromise; others adopt the 'Gap Theory' to accommodate evolution timescales.

Women in God's created order

Early Church

Woman was created second as a partner and help for man. She is subordinate in functional authority, under God, to man. In church women can have no authority over man and cannot teach or lead; however, they are equal in justification.

Medieval Period

Church affirms this position but Romanism develops abbesses, the head of an abbey of nuns. Various female mystics and abbesses also gain significant authority.

The Reformation Period

Early position affirmed. No female leaders in Reformed churches.

Modern Period

Collapse. Cults (e.g. Shakers, 7th Day Adventists) have female leaders. Also Holiness Movt., Pentecostalism & Methodists. Feminism rises in mid-20th c. and infiltrates most churches. Anglicans have female priests; Charismatic churches have female elders, apostles and prophets. Women worship-leaders are common. Women theologians call for a feminist hermeneutic (Schussler, Stanton).

God as Sovereign

Early Church

God's sovereignty over all things (salvation, men and history) affirmed.

Medieval Period

Authority of pope and Romanist tradition diminishes God's sovereignty. Heresies (e.g. Pelagianism & Semi-Pelagianism) deny God's sovereignty in salvation.

The Reformation Period

Early position affirmed. Calvinism especially centres on God's glory.

Modern Period

Collapse. The Enlightenment championed man's reason above divine authority. Science preferred to divine revelation. Vatican 1 affirms authority of the pope. Evolutionary theory denies God's sovereignty, moral commands and revelation. Heresies abound in the church which deny God's sovereignty (e.g. Arminianism, Open Theism).

This is the other key doctrine that must be correct in order to ensure the safety of dogma. The sovereignty of God undergirds all teachings, practices and ethics; we are holy only as he is holy. False teachers elevate man, reason, tradition, church leaders, strategies and so on; true Biblical teachers always glorify God, centring on his sovereignty and majesty.

Providence

Early Church

As part of the decree of salvation, God administers all things to provide for the sustenance of the elect. Thus he provides rain, sun, seasons etc. to preserve the world. Unbelievers benefit from this but the intention is for the elect.

Medieval Period

No significant change.

The Reformation Period

Affirms early position.

Modern Period

Collapse. Deism denies God's active sovereign control of the universe. Pantheistic theories identify God with the universe. Various evangelical theological systems pervert the doctrine of providence to teach a love of God for the reprobate. Common Grace developed initially by Abraham Kuyper in 19th c. This is enhanced by later theologians to teach that God loves all men; God looks in favour on all men; God is pleased with the good works of the reprobate; God restrains sin in society to enable men to do good works. It denies total depravity and God's plan & confuses Providence.

The work of the Spirit in the church

Early Church

The Spirit is the agent of sanctification and the means whereby grace is supplied to the saints, who are to be filled with the Spirit. He is also the seal or guarantee of sonship.

Sub apostolic age

Montanism: proto-Charismatic gifts, especially prophecy, mysticism and women leaders.

Medieval Period

Romanism added men as mediators of the Spirit's work. Sanctification becomes legalistic. Mystics claim their mysticism is the work of the Spirit bringing illumination. Enthusiasts (early Charismatics) claim their extravagances are the work of the Spirit.

The Reformation Period

Affirmation of early position; denial of mysticism and enthusiasm. Puritans struggle over assurance, most claim it is an awaited spiritual experience. Some inspirationist sects, such as Zwickau Prophets and radical Anabaptist enthusiasts.

Modern Period

Collapse. All sorts of spiritualism arise whereby occult ideas are added to the work of the Spirit. Quakers await illumination in meetings. Radical Pietists, Quietists and other mystics seek inward spiritual illuminating experiences. Shakers adopt outright occult and pagan practices claiming they are the Spirit. Pentecostals re-write doctrine of 'baptism in the Spirit' to teach a second experience of grace that gives supernatural gifts. Charismatic Movement multiplies 'spiritual' experiences and sign gifts. Mysticism prevails.

Decree of Election & predestination

Early Church

God decrees salvation of elect before time. God predestines all things according to his sovereign good pleasure. In the time of later fathers (Augustine) Pelagianism erupts.

Medieval Period

Universal theories multiply, such as development of Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism & Semi-Augustinianism.

The Reformation Period

Affirmation of early church position by Reformers. Denial of election by later Arminians & Socinians.

Modern Period

Collapse. In addition to Arminianism and various Pelagian ideas, most evangelicals hazy on election; some deny it. Few understand God's sovereign predestination. Man's free will strongly affirmed. Open Theism even denies God's sovereign foreknowledge.

Atonement

Early Church

Penal, substitutionary atonement by the blood of Christ to satisfy God for sins.
Particular redemption – elect only.

Sub-apostolic age

Recapitulation theory of Irenaeus.
Beginnings of ransom to Satan theory from Origen.

Medieval Period

Various theories begin; such as:
Moral Influence Theory (Abelard),
Example Theory (Abelard),
varieties of ransom to Satan theory. Anselm affirms satisfaction for sin but also Commercial Theory.

The Reformation Period

Reformers emphasise penal atonement and particular redemption.
Later development of Arminianism (denial of part. red.), Amyraldism (compromise on part. red.). Then Moral Governmental theory (Grotius), universalism and Socinianism (Example Theory).

Modern Period

Further collapse. Arminianism prevails, plus Amyraldism (Hypothetical Universalism). Moral Government theory and universalism. Dramatic Theory (Aulen). Mystical Theory (Schleiermacher). Various other ideas. Some evangelicals deny penal substitution as offensive (Steve Chalke).

Justification by faith

Early Church

Justification by faith alone emphasised. It is the declaration of the righteousness of saints, based upon the work of Christ.
Faith is the God-given means of obtaining it. It is pardon for sin.
Heresies (e.g. Judaising) condemned.

Medieval Period

Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism appear. Pelagianism confronted by Augustine but Roman Church gradually becomes Semi-Pelagian based on works righteousness & priestcraft (e.g. confession and penance).
Justification becomes infused righteousness – part prevenient grace, part works.

The Reformation Period

.Restoration of justification by faith; but appearance of Arminianism, Amyraldism & Socinianism, which all pervert justification.

Modern Period

Collapse. Most don't understand justification by faith. due to poverty of teaching. Ecumenism with Roman Church compromises justification. Federal Vision denies it in Presbyterian churches. Arminianism (Semi-Pelagianism) prevails. Some Pelagians popular (e.g. C Finney). Liberal churches deny it. Many other compromisers.

Sanctification

Early Church

Sanctification in three phases: past tense regeneration and provision of new nature. Present tense: progressive sanctification (gradually putting on new nature). Future tense: glorification and eradication of sinful nature and fleshly body.

Medieval Period

Externalism: asceticism & penance as adjunct to monasticism.
Mysticism: subjective emotionalism.
Enthusiasm: spiritual fervour.
Scholasticism: legalism.

The Reformation Period

Emphasis on progressive sanctification and glorification.

Modern Period

Further collapse. Church awash with multiple theories; including: perfectionism of various sorts, such as sinless perfection, instant sanctification, Higher Life theories and Pentecostal ideas. Later, Charismatic novelties associated with a baptism in the Spirit. New Age ideas. Asceticism, mysticism and even occultism.

Conversion

Early Church

Repentance and faith following regeneration and God drawing/calling a person. Demonstrated in baptism.

Sub apostolic writers begin to add legalistic acts e.g. baptism required before conversion.

Medieval Period

Legalism intensifies and requires Romanist acts. Salvation only in the Roman church. Salvation also procured by money from papal indulgences for the dead. Purgatory developed to finish the conversion of the dead.

The Reformation Period

Early church position ratified; Roman practices condemned.

Modern Period

Collapse. Multiple forms of conversion, which is dumbed-down. Arminian free-willism prevails. Invitation system allows people to be converted by merely raising a hand after a sermon. Alpha Course Charismatic-type conversion is when someone falls over after a mystical emotional experience.

Views of salvation

Early Church

Salvation results from God's eternal decree to save the elect and is the actual rescue of them, from guilty sinners to righteous and glorious saints.

Medieval Period

Romanism: salvation is by receiving grace through the Catholic church.
Mystics affirm salvation is by an inward journey of subjective truth through self-denial.

The Reformation Period

Reformed affirm early position. Various views in the cults.

Modern Period

Collapse.
Romanism 1: as Medieval period.
Romanism 2: through the church or through nature.
Liberation Theology: deliverance from oppression.
Existential Theology: altering outlook on life, being called to true existence, true destiny.
Secular Theology: Being self-sufficient and truly human through introspection and scientific enquiry. Learning to be independent of God.
Evangelical Theology: as early church.
Arminian Theology: emphasises man's co-operation with God and free will. [Equals Semi-Pelagianism – man saves himself with God's help.]
Pelagianism: man saves himself without divine help.
Universalism: everybody is saved in the end (various forms).

The means of grace in salvation

Early Church

No means (instrument). Salvation is by efficacious sovereign grace which brings saving faith. Man contributes nothing.

Medieval Period

Romanism: salvation is by baptism, eucharist and sacraments (means without faith) exercised by physical contact (ex opere operato – 'by the work performed').

The Reformation Period

Reformed affirm early position.
Lutherans affirm baptism (baptismal regeneration) and eucharist.
Arminians affirm salvation by Common (prevenient) Grace along with human will.

Modern Period

Collapse. Presence of Romanism, Lutheranism, Arminianism as well as evangelical position.
Some Pentecostal & Charismatic groups affirm salvation by spiritual overpowering (e.g. falling over under the power or 'slain in the Spirit'). Other groups have sacramental practices. Some Charismatics affirm Pelagianism (i.e. no means: e.g. Celtic spirituality).

The Church 1 - The local church

Early Church

Meeting in houses under a plurality of equal elders. Body ministry of mutual edification.

Medieval Period

Formalism; liturgical; hierarchical clergy; silent, submissive laity; grand church buildings

The Reformation Period

Formal liturgy simplified but not eradicated. Leadership simplified but still formal, Church buildings continued.

Modern Period

Collapse. Formalism widespread; hierarchical leadership widespread; submissive laity widespread; dedicated buildings become bigger (warehouses).
Management class added to leadership.

The Church 2 - Church leadership

Early Church - apostolic

Team of equal elders rule local churches. Deacons for admin. (espec. finance for the poor). Leadership style informal in homes. Apostles as church planters, prophets and evangelists as itinerant ministers. These do not supersede elders in local churches. No one man rules over many churches, or even one.

Early Church – sub apostolic

Gradual development of formal, hierarchical clergy and silent, submissive laity. Cyprian establishes monarchical bishops over local elders.

Medieval Period

Further development of hierarchical clergy. Metropolitan bishops gain more authority until a single bishop appears as 'pope' over all (formalised in 1302). Then establishment of cardinals, priests, etc. Similar situation in east and west but different names.

The Reformation Period

Leadership simplified but still formal. Tendency to follow university system with a professorial single leader who preaches assisted by 'ruling elders' who counsel. Non-Reformed churches establish various systems but mostly similar.

Modern Period

Collapse. Formal, hierarchical leadership widespread, submissive laity. Management class added to leadership. Charismatic churches have authoritarian apostles and prophets ruling over many churches. Institutional denominations also have archbishops over many churches. Wide variety of tiered leadership levels and titles, including 'rabbi' in Jewish Root churches.

The Church 3 – sects and denominations

Early Church

All house churches are independent. The most senior church leader is a local church elder; there is none superior.

Regional synods may be called occasionally to deal with an issue but these are not authoritative bodies over many churches. No denominations.

Medieval Period

Gradual development of global denominations: Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Outside these there are many groups of persecuted, underground, house churches, such as Waldensians.

The Reformation Period

Four main streams in the west:
1) Romanism; 2) Lutheranism; 3) Reformed Protestantism; 4) Anabaptism.

The reformers fail to destroy denominations. Erastianism (state church).

Modern Period

Collapse. Protestantism fragments into thousands of sects. Pentecostalism alone has thousands of denominations worldwide and 200m. members. Main streams are: 1) Reformed Presbyterians; 2) Reformed Baptists; 3) Liberal Presbyterians, Baptists and others; 4) Independent evangelicals; 5) Pentecostals; 6) Charismatics; 7) institutional (e.g. Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran). Brethren are virtually already extinct while Methodists are soon to expire.

The Lord's Supper

Early Church

Simple ritual at the centre of the Sunday meeting. All share in bread and wine after a social meal. Thus the cross is the focal point of the local church meeting.

Medieval Period

Gradually the Supper is transformed into an elaborate liturgical extravaganza focusing upon the priest. Wine denied laity. Mass blasphemes Christ (transubstantiation).

The Reformation Period

Supper simplified, wine given to laity, but still a large imposing spectacle centred upon the leader. Transubstantiation denied (Lutherans compromised on this).

Modern Period

Collapse. Mass prevails in Romanism across the world. Similar problems in Eastern Orthodoxy. Many evangelical churches don't have the Supper at all as impracticable in a large church. Others practice it occasionally (e.g. once a month). Few centre upon it. Many churches do not have 'one cup' or real wine. Almost no church has a prefatory meal.

Worship 1 – Instrumental Music

Early Church

No musical instruments. Some begin to appear after 200 and are condemned by church fathers as fleshly and pagan.

Medieval Period

Slow advance of instruments; widespread by 13th century. Use of choirs.

The Reformation Period

Reformers deny musical instruments.

Modern Period

Collapse. Initially pianos and organs only. Many Reformed churches have no instruments up to 20th century. Acoustic guitars added in 1960s. Small bands appear 1970s. Loud, amplified rock bands by mid 1980s. Choirs & backing singers.

Worship 2 – mystical emotionalism

Early Church

Worship rational, reverent and godly.

Medieval Period

Development of mystics, Roman sacramentalism & sacerdotalism, self-abasement. Emotionalism of choirs, pageantry and elaborate imposing buildings.

The Reformation Period

Return to rational, godly, simple worship.

Modern Period

Collapse: Pentecostalism brings passivity, mysticism and occult ideas into worship. Charismatic Movement develops this into full blown occultism and paganism.

Eschatology 1 - millennialism

Early Church

No millennial theories. The return of Christ expected soon. Christ's return at the end of the church age ushering in judgment and the new world.

Sub apostolic age

Some historic premillennialism in a few fathers (Irenaeus, Justin, Tertullian)..

Medieval Period

Amillennialism prevails. Some occasional marginalised premillennial ideas.

The Reformation Period

Amillennialism prevails. Premill. views disparaged as 'Chiliasm'. Later, some postmillennial ideas in the Puritans (e.g. Daniel Whitby).

Modern Period

Collapse: development of four main streams: Historic Premill. (e.g. Eldon Ladd, Erickson); Dispensational Premill. (began mid-19th c.); Postmillennialism (inc. Charismatic dominionism & Reformed Theonomy, both developed in 20th c. and historic version e.g. Shedd, A & C Hodge) & Amillennialism (most Reformed). Dispensationalism becomes majority view spawning many variants (e.g. Darby, Ryrie, Chafer, Walvoord).

Eschatology 2 – Hell

Early Church

Hell is eternal punishment for sin; everlasting torment. It is the expression of God's wrath and justice against sin. It is literal.

Medieval Period

No essential change.

The Reformation Period

No essential change.

Modern Period

Collapse: Gradual denial of a literal hell, beginning in sects and progressing into evangelical churches (e.g. John Stott). Conditional immortality and annihilationism.

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