

The Development of Christian Doctrine

What is Doctrine?

Is a body of teachings,
instructions, beliefs, or
religious dogma held to be true
by a body of believers

I Peter 3:15

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

II Timothy 4:1-4

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;
⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Doctrines

- ✓ Scripture: *Sola Scriptura, Inerrancy and Infallibility*
- ✓ Christology
- ✓ Trinity

Doctrines

- ✓ Soteriology – Justification
- ✓ Eucharist – Communion
 - ✓ Baptism
 - ✓ Sin and Grace
 - ✓ Universalism

Outline

- I. Commonly accepted orthodox doctrine(s)
- II. Historical formation: Debates, Theological and Philosophical issues, Conclusion
- III. Relevance for today & continuing debate

Definitions

Catholic

“...a truth which...is revealed by God and defined by the Church, either through a conciliar decree, or a decision of the Pope, or by the mere fact that it is generally taught in the church”

A. Deneffe

Protestant

“that which is logically formulated and expressed for scientific and apologetic reasons...which represent the objective content of religion. They are regarded in the Christian churches as the truths contained in Holy Scripture.”

A. Harnack

Protestant

“Propositions of faith which an ecclesiastical community expressly requires its members or at least its teachers to acknowledge”

F. Loofs

Where is doctrine found?

- ✓ Confessions/Articles of Faith/Catechisms
- ✓ *Apriori Assumptions* that undergird teachings of the church
- ✓ Common beliefs

How are they created?

- Conflict and difference of belief
- Convened Council
 - ✓ Holy men trained in Scripture
 - ✓ Educated in Theology
 - ✓ Sought guidance of the Holy Spirit

“The church has always been convinced that it does not make doctrinal decisions merely on its own strength, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit...

An insight which the
Christian church has gained,
in human weakness and
historical contingency, but
yet with the help of the Holy
Spirit...

may and must not be
discarded as rubbish.”

B. Lohse

How are they created?

- Declaration of Doctrine was formulated as a *Confession, Creed*.
 - Universal
 - Absolute
 - Infallible

Protestant v. Catholic

“At a number of councils
articles of faith were elucidated
by Scripture...drawn out of
Scripture and based on
Scripture...

To hold to these is the same
as holding to the Word of
God.”

M. Luther

Protestant Challenges

1. How do they stand up to Scripture?

RC: Papal Infallibility –
Depositum Fidei
Protestant: *Sola Scriptura*

Protestant Challenges

1. How do they stand up to Scripture?
2. Is it possible to be a Christian without holding to certain doctrines?
3. Historical Context v. Universality

Creation of Doctrine

✓ Matthew 16:15

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

✓ Threat of Heresies

✓ Christological debate