

Doctrines of Scriptures

Development Of Christian Doctrine

Introduction

When considering the development of Christian doctrine, it is necessary to determine the order in which the New Testament Epistles were written. Having that chronological timeline will help determine the development of the doctrines.

In Acts 2:42 there are the four cardinal points of church order. Granted it was a localized Jewish church, but the principles remain. It is not until later in Acts there is the first established Gentile hint at church order (Acts 11:19-30), and it will be noticed that in that passage there is a variety of gifts and plurality of persons. Just as in Acts 2:42, Acts 11 also has four cardinal points which are added or developments from Acts 2. The four prime observations of the Gentile church are:

- a) Evangelism (Acts 11:20)
- b) Exhortation (Acts 11:20)
- c) Teaching (Acts 11:26)
- d) Prophecy (Acts 11:28)

However, one must be careful, for prophecy (that meaning foretelling) was a “sign gift” only for a period of time, that is, until God by and large left Israel and focused on Gentiles.

Following the ordering of “Lightfoot”, and as far as can be determined, the chronological order of the New Testament epistles is as follows:

| Epistle | Date | Epistle | Date |
|-------------------------------|------------|---|------------|
| James | A.D. 45 | Jude | A.D. 46 |
| 1 Thessalonians | A.D. 53 | 2 Thessalonians Hebrews | A.D. 54 |
| 1, 2, 3 John | A.D. 56 | 1 Corinthians | A.D. 56-57 |
| 2 Corinthians | A.D. 57-58 | Romans | A.D. 57-59 |
| Galatians | A.D. 58 | 1 Peter | A.D. 60 |
| 2 Peter | A.D. 61 | Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon | A.D. 62 |
| Acts | A.D. 63? | 1 Timothy | A.D. 67 |
| Titus | A.D. 67 | 2 Timothy | A.D. 68 |
| Revelation & John's gospel | A.D. 96 | | |

Apostolic Source

The epistles specifically declaring their apostolic source giving them God's apostolic seal of approval are:

Doctrines of Scriptures Development Of Christian Doctrine

| Book | Apostolic Authority | Reference |
|---------------|---------------------|---|
| Romans | Paul | “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle” (Rom. 1:1) |
| 1 Corinthians | Paul | “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God” (1 Cor. 1:1) |
| 2 Corinthians | Paul | “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (2 Cor. 1:1) |
| Galatians | Paul | “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1) |
| Ephesians | Paul | “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (Eph. 1:1) |
| Colossians | Paul | “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (Col. 1:1) |
| 1 Timothy | Paul | Mentioned twice: 1) “ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour” (1 Tim. 1:1) 2) “Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle” (1 Tim. 2:7) |
| 2 Timothy | Paul | Mentioned twice: 1) “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (2 Tim. 1:1) 2) “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher” (2 Tim. 1:11) |
| Titus | Paul | “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Titus 1:1) |
| 1 Peter | Peter | “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:1) |
| 2 Peter | Peter | “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter. 1:1) |

The books which are apostolic but not mentioned due it being unnecessary to endorse apostolic power. They had either “seen the Lord” or “had been with Him”.

| Book | Salutation | Reference | Writer | Seen the Lord or been with Him |
|-----------------|---|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Thessalonians | “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians” | 1 Thess. 1:1 | Paul | Acts 9:27 |
| 2 Thessalonians | “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians” | 2 Thess. 1:1 | Paul | Acts 9:27 |
| Hebrews | “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners” | Heb. 1:1 | Writer unknown | |

Doctrines of Scriptures Development Of Christian Doctrine

| Book | Salutation | Reference | Writer | Seen the Lord or been with Him |
|--|--|-----------|--------|---|
| 1 John | | | John | Acts 4:13 |
| 2 John | | | John | |
| 3 John | | | John | |
| James | “James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ” | Jam. 1:1 | James | Acts 1:21-22, While not mentioned by name, being one of the disciples He was one of those who had seen or been with the Lord. |
| Jude (being the brother of James, Mk. 10:35: Jude 1:1) * | Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James | | Jude | Acts 1:21-22 While not mentioned by name, being one of the disciples He was one of those who had seen or been with the Lord. |
| Revelation | The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him | | John | Acts 4:13 |

* If Jude was a physical brother of the Lord then He would have seen him and therefore correctly viewed as an apostle.

[Having these pieces of data, we can now trace some of the major apostolic doctrines which deal with the local assembly](#)

- 1) Since the only books which deal with local church truths are, 1 and 2 Corinthians; Colossians; Philippians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; and to a lesser extent Hebrews; they will be the only ones considered here.
- 2) Please note, this table is not informing of all the doctrines and practices of the New Testament but only those which have to do with the local church. Since Ephesians has to do with the corporate church, it is not included. The verse, “greet each other with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12 and 1 Thess. 5:26), was a cultural practice as we have shaking of hands today, therefore, it is not included. When a matter is a doctrine there is an automatic practical response, or a responsibility placed on humans.
- 3) No matter how cultural or in what time zone, if there is no doctrine connected with the practice, then it is only a traditional practice, but when a doctrine is connected to it then it becomes binding on the entire age.

Doctrines of Scriptures Development Of Christian Doctrine

- 4) While the first two are not doctrines of the church, they are doctrines which must be accepted before one can be saved and enter the fellowship of the local church.

| Book | Doctrine | Reference |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Romans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal and total depravity • Salvation by faith alone • Exercise of gift | Rom. 3:10-18 Rom. 4:4, 6; 5:1 Rom. 12:6-8 1 Cor. 12:4-13:7 |
| 1 Corinthians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal responsibility • Faithfulness in that which has been committed, the faith, which was once delivered to the saints • Living of the holy things • Behavior in view of the Lord's table • Headship and covering • Behavior at the Lord's Supper • Tongues and ministry • Subjection to others in ministry • Silence of ladies • The purposeful setting aside of funds | 1 Cor. 3:10-15 1 Cor. 4:1-3 1 Tim. 6:20 2 Tim. 2:2 Jude 1:3 1 Cor. 9:9-14 1 Cor. 10:21-25 1 Cor. 11:3-16 1 Cor. 11:17-34 1 Cor. 14:2-23 1 Cor. 14:27-33 1 Cor. 14:34-39 1 Cor. 16:1-2 |
| 2 Corinthians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The handling of finances | 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15 |
| Colossians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deity and exclusiveness of the Lord | Col. 1:15-20; 2:9 |
| 1 Thessalonians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The freedom to preach the gospel and be free to live by the generosity of saints who have received a blessing (Gal. 6:6), as they worked full time for the spread of the gospel or teaching of the saints, or by working to supply one's own needs as Paul did when he made tents (Acts 18:3) | 1 Thess. 2:6-12 |
| 1 Timothy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualifications for elders • The qualifications for deacons • The qualifications for their wives | 1 Tim. 3:1-7 1 Tim. 3:8, 12-13 1 Tim. 3:11 |

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia