

D. The Diminution of Biblical Authority 325-1500 AD

1. Significant Social Factors

a. The conversion of the Empire (313 ff)

We do not think this was a bad thing...by the time of Constantine's profession it is likely that about 1/3 of the persons in the Roman empire were Christians of some sort of profession but it released the church from some sort of reliance on God to a dependence on the state. Authority tends to be delegated to support bases and there is great evidence of this sort of movement in the church of the Imperial age and the times following.

b. Political Involvement of the Church (314 ff)

In a favored civil role the church tended to try to become a "kingmaker" as well as a spoiled child. Since the government would supply the "clout" to make the church decisions work, it became apparent that in church disputes it was more important to have the emperor on your side than just having the truth! The reality of this setting would take the real authority for ecclesiastic office away from the Scripture and vest it in the interested powers of the state-church relationship.

c. Deterioration of governmental stability (476 ff)

While the problem is more immediately one of the western church, the eastern church also suffered through extravagant rules and the avarice of kings. But in the west, the loss of the Roman authority and the eventually coming of rival kingdoms posed a real test for authority. The old "might is right" technique quickly returned to the Empire as a way of life and the finer points of theology were less meaningful in a world where the governmental forces changed with the tide.

d. The Collapsed society of feudalism

I will say little on this but it tended to place the Bible out of the reach of the "common man". Illiteracy was so high---and so little was done to lessen it--the general business of just staying alive was so demanding--and so little alleviation was offered the vast majority...authority tended to lie in the place where one could reap the greatest result the fastest

e. The Growth of Superstition

Much of this sprung from ecclesiastical circles and the miracle tales, etc., on which the illiterate minds of the people fed. Phenomena that the populace could observe became more important than truth they could not read.