

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF FAITH: **Bibliology** (pertaining to the Holy Bible)  
by David M. Coddington

I believe that revelation is the way in which God discloses information about Himself and what He wants of mankind (Elwell *Evangelical* 1019). God's revelation can be categorized into General and Special Revelation. General Revelation is God's revelation of Himself through: creation (Psalms 19:1-6), history and providence (Daniel 2:21), and human nature (Romans 1:19). All of mankind experiences general revelation from God (Acts 14:7; Romans 1:20). General revelation reveals the existence of God (Psalms 191:4; Romans 1:18-20) and the awareness of right and wrong (Romans 2:14-15) to everyone; however, fallen man suppresses that knowledge with sin (Romans 1:18-20). There is nothing wrong with general revelation or God's communication through it; rather, mankind is at fault for rejecting the truth that is evident in all of God's creation. In addition, general revelation does not reveal any information about salvation. The only way to be saved is through believing in Jesus Christ (John 3:16) and that is not revealed in general revelation but in special revelation. General revelation then is sufficient to condemn mankind for rejecting God; however, it is insufficient to save mankind (Romans 1:18-23). God does not condemn humans for what they do not know but rather the truth that they reject.

I believe that God supernaturally communicated, through various methods, to mankind information that could not be understood from general revelation and to elucidate information revealed in general revelation (Erickson 210). The supernatural ways God revealed Himself to mankind were dreams (Genesis 20:3; 31:11-13; 37:5), visions (Isaiah chapters 1, 6; Ezekiel chapter 1), Urim and Thurmim (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21), lots (Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:21-26), audible voices (1 Kings 19:13), theophanies (Judges 13; Genesis 16:7-14), and angels (Isaiah chapter 6; Matthew chapter 1; Luke chapters 1-2). These were special actions for a specific time that have now been replaced by a better revelation: the Incarnation of Jesus (John 1:14-18; Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus is the incarnation, or bodily manifestation, of the Word of God (John 1:14). Jesus revealed the Father through His person (John 14:9), His words (John 6:63), and His works (John 5:36). The special revelation before Jesus and of Jesus is recorded in the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). This establishes the Bible as the official revelation from God. In it, God reveals His will, characteristics, plan of salvation, and the guidelines for Christian life. The primary focus is on God's plan of salvation and reconciliation as a result of man's sinful nature through the fall into sin (Enns 161). God's plan of revelation in having it recorded in written form is perfect. It is a timeless medium that is fairly objective, complex, and unchanging.

I believe the Bible is authoritative in that the words in the Bible are God's words and so to disobey the Bible is to disobey God (Grudem 73). The authoritative nature of Scripture is derived from the authority of God; the purpose of which is "to liberate human beings, to judge and condemn evil and sin in the world in order to set people free to be fully human" (Wright). Its authority is both conferred by God and innate because it claims to have the authority of God (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Bible alone should be used as the final authority in a Christian's life for knowing God's will and how to live the Christian life correctly (2 Timothy 3:16). Experience, church teaching, and anything else outside of the Bible needs to be confirmed with Scripture (Isaiah 8:20). God's will is not completely subjective and open to personal interpretation. The Word of God has set objective principles that need to be applied to the life of a believer.

I believe the Bible is credible, or trustworthy in nature. The prophecies in the Bible will come to pass as God, through the prophets, declared them (Isaiah 46:9-11; 41:22-23). The promises of God recorded in the Bible will be upheld (Psalms 89:34; Hebrews 6:18; 2 Peter 3:9). The historical claims of the Bible, such as: times, dates, place, and stories are true and accurate. The Bible is internally consistent in that it will not contradict itself. It can be automatically assumed that two passages do not contradict and need to be harmonized. The Bible has been faithfully and correctly passed down through time so that the modern text is virtually the same as the original documents (McDowell 39). The implication is that the authoritative, inerrant, and inspired nature of the original manuscripts applies to the modern text. The writings of the apostles on the life of Jesus are true, accurate accounts that are from eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35; 2 Peter 1:16).

I believe in the sufficiency of the Bible. The Bible contains all of the information necessary for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15), and God uses the Bible to bring people to salvation (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). The Bible is sufficient to equip believers for Christian living (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and to provide for every need in life (Psalms 19:7-14). The Scriptures provide for every human need by: restoring the soul (Psalms 19:7), imparting wisdom (v.7), causing joy (v.8), and enlightening the eyes (v.8) (MacArthur). The Scripture is also sufficient in defending against spiritual attacks and breaking bondages to sin (Ephesians 6:10-18; John 8:32; Hebrews 4:12). There is no source outside of the Bible that Christians need to look to for information about God and His will. The amount of information that was revealed in the Scriptures throughout history was and is sufficient for each time period. Because God's revelation is sufficient, nothing should be added to the Scriptures; whether it be God's words or not (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19).

I believe that the Bible was inspired. The Holy Spirit oversaw the writing of the Bible in such a way that the original writings were God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16) meaning the words written in the Bible are the very words of God. The Holy Spirit reminded the writers of past events (John 14:26), which they then wrote down. He also influenced the writers to write exactly what He wanted in some situations (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit used the personality and style of the writers to communicate God's revelation in the Word of God. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit dictated the entire Bible; rather, the Holy Spirit worked in the lives and minds of the writers so that each and every word is exactly how God wanted to communicate His revelation (Matthew 5:17-18). The Bible claims to be the very words of God in the Old Testament (Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 10:1-2; Ezekiel 1:3; Zechariah 1:1) and in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 19:9). The writers in the Bible believed other writings in the Bible to be inspired (Matthew 1:22; Acts 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2). The writers in the Bible denied writing by human wisdom and instead claimed to have a divine origin (Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 3:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The writers in the Bible believed that all of Scripture, from main idea to the very words, was inspired (Exodus 24:2-8; Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:16).

I believe that the Word of God is inerrant because God must speak truthfully and the Bible is His very words (2 Samuel 7:28; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). The Bible then must not and does not contain any error or lie (Numbers 23:19; Psalms 12:6; 119:89; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 24:35). The Bible can be completely true and still use normal speech patterns such as: approximation (Luke 3:23; 9:28, Acts 19:7), rounded numbers (Numbers 1:21-23), loose quotations, and unusual grammar. The same event can vary in details between accounts and not take away from the inerrancy of the text. The

authors saw the same event from their points of view or used different language, but in either case both are correct. There can be problem or difficult passages and still be inerrant. Humans, even redeemed ones, have the sin nature that may warp their understanding or interpretation. God is in complete control of language so He can use it to express Himself perfectly; therefore, there cannot be miscommunication from God to mankind in the Scriptures. Every word of Scripture has a purpose and place. Every detail in the Bible is true and accurate (Proverbs 30:5) concerning all of the subjects that it speaks about, including historical and scientific facts. The Bible can use everyday language to describe the world and still be inerrant even though the statement is technically not scientifically accurate. Our current manuscripts are inerrant, just as the original manuscripts were inerrant. Denying inerrancy is a slippery slope to discounting other doctrines as well. Jesus viewed Scripture as being inerrant historically (Matthew 12:40; 19:3-5; Luke 17:26-27) and in its entirety (Matthew 5:17-18).

I believe the Holy Spirit works to illuminate the Scriptures in the heart and mind of believers. The Holy Spirit does not give new revelation but rather assists Christians in the endeavor of trying to understand and interpret what is written in the Bible (John 14:26; John 16:13). He also reminds believers what to say in times of need, including when under persecution for the faith (Luke 12:12). In Bible times He revealed specific information to certain people (Acts 21:11; Acts 20:23); however, since the canon has been closed He primarily speaks to believers through the Scriptures. The illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is only for those who have been regenerated by the Spirit. The unregenerate man is unable to see or understand the truth of God (Proverbs 4:19; Psalms 82:5; Ephesians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 2:14). A believer can block the Holy Spirit from illuminating Scriptures by living in sin (1 Corinthians 3:1-3); however, the Holy Spirit assists the believer in removing those barriers if the believer cooperates with Him (Ephesians 1:17-18; 3:18-19; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16; 4:6). Because of this, the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is a constant process throughout the life of a believer that must be undertaken every time the Scriptures are studied (Psalms 119:18; Ephesians 1:18-19). The Holy Spirit illuminates and assists those believers who have the gift of teaching or preaching in understanding and communicating the passage that is being taught to believers or unbelievers (Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:7). Knowledge of Scripture alone is not an end to itself but it must be interpreted correctly, applied to life, and then lived out through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not insure that all interpretation is correct, so integrity and prayer are crucial for interpretation.

I believe that the Bible has clarity, or perspicuity, in that the average believer will be able to understand its teaching on salvation and how to live the Christian life (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalms 1:2; 19:7; 119:130). High intellectual ability is not needed to understand the Bible but rather being spiritually and morally in line with God is needed (Psalms 19:7; 119:130; 1 Corinthians 2:14). The letters and books of the Bible were written to ordinary people (Colossians 4:15-16); consequently, meaning and interpretation is not solely located with the clergy. Even though the Bible has clarity, believers must diligently work to try and understand it (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17) because there are difficult passages in the Bible (2 Peter 3:15). Difficult passages, unclear passages, and interpretive mistakes are responsible for misunderstandings and disagreements over the Bible. Undertaking scholarly work or biblical education is prudent for those who wish to dive deeper into a further understanding of the Word of God. There are no hidden messages, secret meanings, or special codes in the Bible for

certain people to find, and those persons who attempt to do so are sinning because they are trying to add to the text.

I believe that the Holy Spirit superintended the process of God's people recognizing and selecting of books to include in the canon and then protected them throughout time. The current sixty-six books of the Bible form the full, complete canon of Scripture because of the work of the Holy Spirit. The writing of the Old Testament began with Moses (Deuteronomy 31:24-26) and ended with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The books written during the inter-testament-al period should not be placed in the canon. The New Testament canon was written primarily by the apostles and consists of twenty-seven books. The early church correctly used four general criteria for accepting books into the canon: (1) apostolic authorship of the document; (2) apostolic content of the document; (3) claim of inspiration of the document; (4) the "ring of genuineness" (Elwell *Baker* 59). The New Testament quotes the Old Testament in such a way that the authors considered the Old Testament inspired (Matthew 5:17-18; 23:35).

The early church did not make books inspired but rather recognized the inspiration that was already present in the books. Also, the books were immediately inspired as soon as they were written, not when the church recognized them as inspired. There were debates over what books would be put in the canon but it did not detract from the inspiration of the books. There is no need to add or take away from the canon, and it is a sin to do so (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). The canon has been considered closed since A.D. 397 and there will not be any books discovered or written that should be added to the canon (Ryrie 45-46). This excludes the books that some cults have added to their Bibles. Additions to the text such as chapter divisions, verses, and language marks are helpful but not inspired. The Holy Spirit most likely worked through history to make sure that those changes stay true to the text, but they are not inspired.

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