

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF FAITH: **Theology Proper** (pertaining to the major categories of the study of God)
by David M. Coddington

Studying God is the most important endeavor that a person can undertake because the knowledge of God impacts every area of life. Knowledge of God is necessary for eternal life. Those who reject the knowledge of God condemn themselves to damnation (Romans 1:25). I believe the knowledge of God is the only way to personal holiness. Believers cannot know how to conduct themselves unless they understand the nature of God. We are to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). The knowledge of God is the only way the church can become strong (Daniel chapter 1). If believers know that God is holy, sovereign, and just, they will be stronger in their faith and will be able to stand against evil. Studying God will reveal knowledge of ourselves and give us knowledge of this world. We must undertake the study of God in order to understand what kind of God He is so that we can know how to worship, relate, and pray to God. A believer's relationship with God is based on their understanding of Him.

I believe that the knowledge of God's existence is intuitive (Romans 1:19-21) and revealed in nature (Psalms 19:1-6). The existence of God does not need to be proven because we already operate with the knowledge of it. It is impossible to consistently live as if there is no God. Denying the existence of God denies that there is any logic, beauty, or meaning in this world. The existence of God is so intuitive that the Bible presupposes it. The Bible never seeks to prove the existence of God but rather states from the very beginning that He exists (Genesis chapter 1). This is necessary because without the self-revelation of God through the Bible and creation, we would not be able to know that He exists. The only way that we can know that God exists is if He tells us.

I believe that the full nature of God is incomprehensible to finite beings (Ecclesiastes 11:5; Romans 11:33); however He has chosen to reveal some of His nature to us and it can be summed up in this statement: God is spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. God is spirit (John 4:24) and cannot be seen (Luke 24:39; 1 Timothy 6:16). In all of His being and attributes He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. There is no measure to how great He is and that will remain the same throughout eternity future and past.

I believe that God is immanent in creation. He is a spirit that is present in His creation. He is not creation, nor do the objects in creation add up to equal God. God is always present in all of creation equally at the same time (Jeremiah 23:34; Ephesians 4:6). Not only is He present in creation but also takes an active part in it (Psalm 65:9-13; Isaiah 63:11). He can work both directly and indirectly with creation. He directly spoke to people in the Old Testament (Genesis 3:9; Exodus 20:1; Psalm 33:9) and He indirectly works through His people (Romans 11:11), providence (Acts 14:17), angels (Genesis chapter 16), and His Son (John 5:19). Because of His immanence, God has come to us and He can make contact with unbelievers. Man would not be able to know or understand God without His immanence.

I believe that God is present in His creation, and is independent, separate, and superior to creation (Psalms 97:9; Isaiah 55:8-9; Ephesians 4:6). His characteristics are reflected in humans because we were created in the image of God; however they cannot compare to the nature of God. "God's being is eternal; the world is temporal.

God's knowledge is total; human knowledge is incomplete. God's character is holy; humanity's character is fallen and sinful" (Elwell 498). God is self-existent, meaning that He does not rely on anything for His existence (Exodus 3:14; John 5:26). Creation, on the other hand, relies on Him for existence.

I believe that God is perfect and complete in all of His attributes. It is better to list, or organize, God's attributes according to types of attributes rather than the attributes that are communicable or incommunicable. Mankind was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) so humans reflect the attributes of God; however, mankind's attributes are limited and distorted by sin. It is better, then, to classify God's attributes according to types.

God's attributes are "those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God and which constitute the basis and ground for His various manifestations to His creatures" (Strong 244). I believe that God is infinite in His nature; therefore, man will never be able to fully know His character. Fortunately, God has revealed some of His nature in the Bible and through His Son. The following list is not comprehensive but covers broad areas of God's nature. In His nature, God is spirit (John 4:24), invisible (Luke 24:39; 1 Timothy 6:16), and active. Metaphysically, God is self-existent (Exodus 3:14; John 5:26), eternal (Psalms 29:10; 48:14), omnipresent (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalms 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24), and unchanging (Psalms 102:25-27; Hebrews 1:10-12). Intellectually, God is omniscient (Psalms chapter 139; John 21:17; 1 John 3:20), faithful (2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23; Revelation 19:11), and wise (Romans 11:33; 16:27). Ethically, God is holy (Psalms 5:4; Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:13-14), righteous (Psalms 72:12-14; Isaiah 65:17), and loving (Deuteronomy 7:7; John 3:16). Emotionally, God detests evil (Nahum 1:3), is long-suffering (Genesis 15:16; Exodus 34:6), and compassionate (Lamentations 3:22; Micah 7:19; Matthew 15:32). Existentially, God is free, authentic (1 Corinthians 2:11), and omnipotent (Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37). Relationally, God is transcendent in being (John 8:23), and immanent in all activity (Isaiah 57:15) (Elwell 492-499).

The Bible uses many names of God, particularly in the Old Testament, that reveal His character and how He deals with mankind, which include: El Shaddai "All-Sufficient One" (Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11), El Elyon "Most High God" (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 57:2), Adonai "Lord" (Genesis 18:32; Deuteronomy 9:26; 2 Samuel 7:18), Yahweh "Lord" (Genesis 2:4; Exodus 3:15; Psalms 140:8), Jehovah Nissi "Lord my Banner" (Exodus 17:15), Jehovah Raah "Lord My Shepherd" (Psalms 21:3), Jehovah Rapha "Lord that Heals" (Exodus 15:26), Jehovah Shammah "Lord is There" (Ezekiel 48:35), Jehovah Sebaot "Lord of Hosts" (1 Samuel 1:3; Psalms 80:19; Jeremiah 48:1), and Elohim "Majesty" (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 7:9; Jeremiah 3:13) (*Blue*).

I believe that there are characterizations of God in the Bible that describe who He is in metaphorical language. These characterizations can be organized by the relationships, jobs, and statuses of God. Relationally God is described as a father (Hosea chapter 1), mother (Deuteronomy 22:18), husband (Hosea), friend (Jeremiah 3:4; 2 Chronicles 20:7), and lover (Song of Solomon). Vocationally, God is described as a shepherd (Ezekiel chapter 31), artist, potter (Isaiah 64:8), builder (Amos), teacher, warrior, and tradesmen (Isaiah chapter 1). In His relation to the nation of Israel, He is described as a monarch (Jeremiah 3:17), king (Jeremiah 10:7-10), judge (Genesis

chapter 18), and savior. These characterizations show that God is involved in the world and how He relates to those in the world.

I believe that the decrees of God are “His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass” (*Westminster*). God also makes decrees that concern creation such as: God's decree against Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:24), nature (Job 28:26; Proverbs 8:29), and regulations in history (Exodus 15:25; Romans 1:32). God set His decrees before He created the world (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:11). The decrees of God are from His sovereign will that are carried out through humans, and ultimately Jesus Christ. Divine decree was behind the death of Jesus (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23). Humans have the option to follow the decrees of God or to choose not to.

I believe that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 33:6). The creative work of God includes the spiritual realm as well as heaven (John 1:3; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3). He created angels as well as humans (Job 38:4-7). In Genesis chapter 1, He created Adam and Eve personally by breathing into them. God created time. Time did not exist before that point because He is an eternal being that exists outside of time (Job 38:26; Psalm 90:2). The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ also take part in creation. Creation took place through Jesus (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16). The Holy Spirit preserved, sustained, and governed creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalms 104:30). God created the universe to show His glory (Isaiah 43:7; Psalms 19:1-2). He did not have to create the universe but chose to according to His free will (Revelation 4:11).

I believe that the providence of God is complete. He is “continually involved with all created things in such a way that He: keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them; cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and directs them to fulfill His purposes” (Grudem 315). God preserves all of creation (Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). God's preservation does not mean that He is constantly making new creation. God cooperates with creation and directs it. This includes nature (Psalms 148:8; 135:6), animals (Psalms 104:27-29), events (Proverbs 16:33), nations (Job 12:23; Psalms 22:28), and human lives (Jeremiah 1:5; Proverbs 20:24; 1 Corinthians 4:7). God uses evil to accomplish His purposes and for good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28), yet He never sins and can never be blamed for evil (Luke 22:22; James 1:13-14). God governs everything so that they accomplish His will (Daniel 4:35; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 15:27).

I believe that God worked through different dispensations throughout history (John 1:17; Galatians 3:19-25; Ephesians 1:10). In each dispensation, “the basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the requirement for salvation in every age is faith; the object of faith in every age is God; and the content of faith changes in the various dispensations” (Ryrie 123). In each dispensation, God worked differently with His people. There are seven dispensations in history: Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Mosaic Law, Grace, and Millennium. The Church is separate from the nation of Israel and did not take its place. God has a program for the nation of Israel and a program for the Church. The prophecies and promises associated with the nation of Israel will still be fulfilled for them (Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 30:1-10; 2 Samuel 7:12-16).

I believe that “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God” (Grudem 226). The members of the Trinity are one in essence (Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19). This means that all members possess all of the divine attributes and act in unity (John 5:19; 8:28; 12:49). God is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This does not mean that there are three completely separate beings, existing and functioning entirely independently of the other two. “In God there are not three individuals along side of, and separate from one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence” (Berkhof 87). The Trinity has distinct relationships: the Son is begotten by the Father (John 1:18; 1 John 4:9); and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 16:7).

I believe that Jesus Christ is eternal, born into the human race from a virgin, was wholly man and divine, and emptied Himself. Jesus is eternal and existed before creation (John 1:1; 8:58; Hebrews 1:8). He worked before creation (John 1:3), and appeared on the earth in the Old Testament (Judges 6:11ff). The “Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth” (Enns 232). Jesus was born from Mary who was a virgin (Matthew 1:23), and was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35). Jesus chose to be born a human and take on flesh. He had a flesh and blood body (Matthew 13:55; John 19:28). As a man, He went through normal human development (Luke 2:52). He did this to represent mankind but did not have a sinful nature (1 John 3:5). Jesus was God as well as human. Jesus was fully God (John 5:25). “He is declared, in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fullness of attributes which make God God” (Warfield 39).

I believe that Christ’s temptations were genuine but He could not have sinned; His character was impeccable (Matthew 28:18; John 2:25; Hebrews 13:8). When Jesus came to earth, He emptied Himself and limited the use and visibility of some of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:7). In His nature, Jesus was fully God and fully man, which created a hypostatic union. Jesus had two natures, divine and human, which were inseparably united. These two natures were not altered but were complete and whole. He also has one personality that is both God and man.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and has His own distinct personality. He is not an “it” or a “thing” but rather a person. He has knowledge (1 Corinthians 2:11), a mind (Romans 8:27), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), and a will (1 Corinthians 12:4). He performs works, that include teaching (John 14:26), testifying (John 15:26), guiding (John 16:13), convicting (John 16:8), regenerating (Titus 3:5), interceding (Romans 8:26), and commanding (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit is fully God and therefore has all of the divine attributes: life (Romans 8:2), love (Galatians 5:22), truth (John 14:17), omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:10-12), omnipotence (Job 33:4), omnipresence (Psalms 139:7-10), eternal (Hebrews 9:14), and holy (Matthew 12:32).

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