

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

Article 1: The Scriptures

Question #1 – What is the BFM

The Baptist Faith and Message is the official doctrinal position adopted by the SBC. Because of local church autonomy, that does not necessarily mean that this is what all Baptists believe.

In this sense it differs from a creed. (Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, etc.)

The SBC was formed in 1845 and it would be safe to say that many (if not most) held to the beliefs contained in a document known as The New Hampshire Confession (1833). For about 80 years, the NHC was a good guide as to what SBC believed.

But in 1924, a huge controversy was brewing in the USA about the teaching of evolution in the public schools. The year (1924) the SBC appointed a committee to help draft a statement of faith. That statement of faith was adopted the following year in 1925 and was called "The Baptist Faith and Message." It has numerous references to the Creator, an obvious reference to the evolution controversy which largely prompted the BFM to be drafted.

The document remained unchanged for nearly 40 years. But in 1961, a Southern Baptist seminary professor published a book called, "*The Message of Genesis*." The heretical book called into question the historical accuracy of the creation account and was a clear sign of the liberal leanings of many within the SBC. In 1962 the SBC met in San Francisco and a committee was appointed to review the BFM and help address the issue.

That committee led by then-SBC President Dr. Herschel Hobbs (Hobbs commentary) presented a revised statement to the SBC in 1963 and it was adopted without revision.

The 1963 statement of faith stood for another 35 years. In 1998 and again in 2000 it was amended to add statements about the definition of a family and the role of women in ministry.

Interestingly every issue that has prompted a revision of the BFM could be answered by a proper understanding of the first 3 chapters of Genesis.

*Creation, Evolution, The family, Homosexuality
The role of women in ministry (Paul points to the Fall)*

Question #2 – How is it used in the SBC?

It is designed to help guide the beliefs and practices of our SBC entities.

For that reason (PTL) all professors at our 6 SBC seminaries must sign the BFM. Personnel with our NAMB and IMB must sign it as well. NOTE: That has been a great source of controversy!

Statement of Intent:

This class is not designed to ridicule or demean other denominations but we will compare and contrast... It is simply to teach through our official doctrinal statement.

With that said, we are not going to be studying Baptist distinctives but Bible doctrines. Where others disagree, we believe they are wrong...not necessarily lost...just wrong.

NOTE: Denominations exist for a reason and those reasons are almost always doctrinal. Some of those doctrinal differences surround major issues. Others do not.

1962 Committee summary statements.

Throughout its work your committee has been conscious of the contribution made by the statement of "The Baptist Faith And Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925. It quotes with approval its affirmation that "Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith."

Furthermore, it concurs in the introductory "statement of the historic Baptist conception of the nature and function of confessions of faith in our religious and denominational life." It is, therefore, quoted in full as part of this report to the Convention.

(1) That they constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body, large or small, for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us. They are not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament, viz., repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

(2) That we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility. As in the past so in the future Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time.

(3) That any group of Baptists, large or small have the inherent right to draw up for themselves and publish to the world a confession of their faith whenever they may think it advisable to do so.

Now here you see that we as Baptists differ from other denominations. We don't have as Baptist an authoritative teaching body. There is not this ecclesiastical oversight. If I were to receive a letter from Nashville saying, "You will teach this view of prophecy, or this view of the doctrines of grace," I would throw it in the trash and laugh as I did it.

We interpret the scriptures together as a local body of believers, there is no authoritative position of the Southern Baptist Convention over local churches.

(4) That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience.

In other words, no member of this church should go to another member of this church and say, "You can't believe that in our church because it doesn't line up with the baptist faith and message." Now if what they believe or teach does not line up with Scripture, then you can take issue with that. But we do not base our faith or practice on the BFM, it is simply a guide for us

(5) That they are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.

In other words, we have the freedom as Baptist to draw from the Scriptures our own person convictions. For instance, as we go through this document you will discover there are 1 or 2 aspects of it that I take issue with. One in particular is the idea of "closed communion" which you would find inferred in Article 7.

1963 BF & M	2000 BF & M
<p>The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of Gods revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.</p>

I. The Full Inspiration of the Bible

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired

This recognizes the Divine aspect of Scripture, and the human aspect of Scripture. I hope we reconginize that Matthew sat down and wrote, Paul sat down and wrote, or in some instances dictated to a scribe.

Theo pneustos, God-breathed. We don't think we're holding any old book here. We recognize that God has loved us enough to instruct us in His truths. Because of that, the word is our source for all instruction. It will be the basis for all I preach. Otherwise, I may as well not preach. Now I love pulling in quotations from other books, or from theologians, or other individuals. But all of those things are judged by THE BOOK. We would never preach from any other book.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16

No statement, no creed, no book is elevated to the level of Scripture. This church for the past 80 years or so has been hiring preachers who believe this book and love this book and preach this book. Thus saith the Lord from the Book

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. 2 Peter 1:19-20

The Holy Spirit carried the writers. What did that look like?

Four Theories of Inspiration

How did God work through these men?

A. Dictation – it holds that God came down and possessed these men and dictated through the human author what he wanted on the pages. It would have been as if, for instance, Paul went into some sort of trance and God dictated through him what he wanted on the pages of Scripture. The way a puppet master would cause a puppet to be used.

I reject this view, because I think it is a very narrow view. I don't think it takes into consideration the author's personal style and vantage point as they were writing. Yes, the Bible is without error, it is infallible, it is

inerrant, but I don't think that God came down and possessed these men as to what they should write in a mechanical way. If you would have seen Paul write, you would have seen him sitting at a desk, writing.

B. Illumination view – this is the idea that God gave a heightened sense of religious sensibility to people. In other words, they were just kind of illumined in their minds. It's the idea that God sort of nudged the human author in a certain direction. This view was really more of a reactionary view to the dictation view of inspiration. Dictation takes too much away from the human authors, this view takes too much away from God. God was not just giving the human authors hints and nudges, but in a very real way was directing their thoughts and their writing to be exactly what He intended it to be.

C. Encounter view – the Bible is not really inspired in its authorship per se, but it is a good book, again that may contain a "record" of God's revelation, but its full inspiration happens when we read it. When we encounter the Scriptures. We should reject this view because if the Bible does have errors in it then when you read it for your "personal encounter," how do you know that you're not encountering an error?

D. Plenary verbal – When the Bible writers, their eyes didn't glaze over and they didn't slip into some sort of trance, they weren't sitting there stripped of who they were, but God was actively working in their minds and hearts to give us just the right words that we needed. This means that God worked in a complete way, even through the personalities of the human authors. **PAGE 10-11 of workbook.**

If you've ever read Paul, and then John, you know you are reading two different styles of writers. If it was the dictation view, it would all sound the same.

II. The Bible is God's Revelation

God's revelation of Himself to man

God's ultimate revelation is Jesus Christ. Jesus never stands in opposition to the Bible, but always in fulfillment of it. The Bible speaks to us and reveals to us what God is like, it is the special, specific revelation of God to man.

In fact you were given types of revelation in your study guide. Special (or specific) and general. Give me some examples of General revelation – special.

Don't you sense in your own life when you read the Bible that God is doing something in your heart that is much deeper and much more significant than when you read the newspaper or a good novel. That is because it is God's revelation, his revealing, of Himself specifically to mankind.

There's a difference between revelation and illumination. Revelation, is when God uncovers something that was hidden and illumination is when God awakens our hearts and our minds to see something. Every time you open the Bible, you will have revelation, but not necessarily illumination if we are sin.

Revelation – God to man

Inspiration – Man to parchment

Duplication – Parchment to parchment

Problem...it is still in Greek and Hebrew.

3 major revisions to the KJV with over 100,000 changes.

It is difficult to find an actual 1611 KJV.

If you do find one, it contains 80 books (Apocrypha).

All translations are the translations of men.

The translations are not necessarily inspired.

To the degree they stray from the original, they are not inspired.

Avoid using paraphrase Bibles and amplified Bibles as your main Bible.

Rev. 22:18-19 – adding and taking away?

NOTE: No disputed verse(s) deals with a major doctrine that is not treated elsewhere in the Scripture.

III. The Bible is Inerrant

It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction...truth, without any mixture of error

Denominations historically have risen and fallen with their view of Scripture. When denominations have come to a point in their history where their view and position of Scripture as sunk to the point where it is just a book, or worse a collection of myths and fables, that denomination has just signed its own death warrant. On the contrary, when a denomination holds to strong view of Scripture you will see that denomination flourish.

Let me be honest, there are some things in the SBC that are frustrating to me. Sometimes, particularly with things that are in the news, etc. Of course the convention is made up of people like you and I who are also flawed, so it is to be expected that there will be mistakes made and courses of action that are not wise. But I will say very clearly, the SBC, with all of its flaws, has held to a strong view of inerrancy. The Bible is trustworthy and it is from God. I fear the day when the SBC would say, “well we don’t really believe the Bible.” It would be the beginning of the end for us.

Now 40 years ago when the convention was fighting over the controversy, the primary controversy was this issue of inerrancy. Lots of professors lost their jobs. This all erupted from the publishing of the Broadman commentary. Ralph Elliot. Parabolic, symbolic.

Inerrancy – when all the facts are known, the Bible in its original writings properly interpreted in light of the culture and communication means that had developed by the times of its composition will be shown to be completely true and therefore not false in all that it affirms to the degree of precision intended by the author and all matters relating to God and His creation

People in the ancient world wrote in very different styles than we write in today. It would be unfair and unwise to interpret them according to modern standards. i.e. The gospels putting events in different order.

When John the Baptist was baptizing it says that all of Jerusalem went out to him to be baptized (Matthew 3:5). It’s a form of writing called a synecdoche. I went to the party, you should have come, because everybody was there.

That would be putting an unfair standard on the way the Bible writers wrote.

IV. The THREE-FOLD Truth of Scripture

It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter
God for its author. He is the author. He used man, but He is the author.

Salvation for its end. The purpose of God’s revelation of himself to mankind through the Bible is to communicate to them the means of salvation.

Truth for its matter – It is true, not false. The Bible is not selling us a bill of goods or lying to us

V. The Bible is the only means for true ECUMENISM

The true center of Christian union

Ecumenism means cooperation. The Bible is how we cooperate with other bodies. As a rule we don't go into joint worship services with people who think the Bible is a bunch of lies. I'm thankful that we have community services, and as I have sat down and spent time with the ministers in this community I have found all of them to be men who highly esteem the Word of God. We have our differences of interpretation, but we have those just within this room. It is around the Bible that we can join together as friends.

VI. It is the ultimate standard of faith and conduct

The supreme standard by which all human conduct

Hebrews 4:12

What you believe about the Bible will affect the way you view life. The Bible is linked to our conduct.

VII. The Bible is A Christological book. John 1:1, Acts 4:12

All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation

You'll notice this was another area of significant change in the new version of the Baptist Faith and Message. Why? Simply put, because 30 years of abuses and attacks upon the integrity of the Bible made clear that some were using this language to deny the truthfulness and authority of the Word of God. Some who have taught in our seminaries over the past several decades claimed this allowed them to deny the truthfulness of whatever biblical passages did not rise to their personal standard of Jesus' intention. Professors and pastors have denied that God ordered the conquest of Canaan, tested Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac or inspired the Apostle Paul when he wrote about the family or roles in the church.