

The Baptist Faith and Message:

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

In section II, the *BF&M* addresses the doctrine of God in four paragraphs. The first paragraph sets forth God, His attributes and the nature of the Trinity. The following three paragraphs in the section deal respectively with the three Persons of the Trinity and Their work.

There is one and only one living and true God.

From a Christian perspective, this sentence almost seems unnecessary because, in our western culture, monotheism predominates. However, in many parts of the world, people believe in multiple gods just like the Greeks and Romans did in the time of Christ. We will always have to deny polytheism, pantheism and any other “ism” which advocates unbiblical concepts of God.

He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe.

God is a male spiritual being, not female or neuter. God is not a mindless universal force or energy to which people connect to in life and merge with in death. God is not “Mother Nature,” the term which the politically correct use in relation to natural phenomena. He is the infinitely intelligent spiritual being who created all matter, space, and time simply by willing it to exist from nothing. He holds it together by His power and He orders it through His natural laws and spoken laws. Yet, although He is personally everywhere in His creation (immanent), He is separate from it (transcendent). His creation is not an extension of his essence or His being.

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.

We have previously pointed out that the Scriptures are inerrant or perfect. If God had any imperfection, we could view His inspired Word with suspicion. God Himself has testified to His perfection and His holiness. In Him, there is no darkness (sin) at all. It is impossible for Him to lie. The fact that God cannot change is tied to His infinite perfection. If a being is perfect, any change would result in imperfection.

God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures.

The power of God is on display and indisputable. We love that attribute. Who wants a wimpy God? However, I confess that I am not always thrilled that God knows everything, particularly my actions, thoughts, and intents. Still, He knew me and all of my sins before He formed me and saved me. God’s knowledge of future events has been explained two ways. One view is that He foresees future events and the fact that He has

The Baptist Faith and Message:

II. God

foreseen them makes them certain. The other view (the one I hold to) is that God's omniscience is based on the fact that God has declared (or foreordained) the end from the beginning, saying His counsel shall stand and He will do all His pleasure as He says in Isaiah 46. The *BF&M*, while never explicitly committing to one view or the other, seems to favor the foresight view. The last phrase suggests that God knows who will "decide to accept Jesus as their Savior" because He has foreseen that decision. This view is inconsistent with the biblical doctrine of election in which the Scriptures state that it is God who chooses whom He will save. With the foresight understanding of election, God has NO CHOICE because the choice was made by the person and God can only acknowledge it. It amazes me that many theologians are willing to say that God is sovereign in everything, except a decision for Christ. Some liberal Christian theologians have become so protective of human free will, that they deny that God knows certainly all future events. They also think that they are protecting God's holiness because, if God has foreordained all events, He becomes responsible for sin. Scripture affirms foreordination and denies that God can sin or be an accomplice in the sins of angels or men.

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

This should be the response of all human-kind just from the fact that our existence depends every moment on God. However, since the fall, love toward God does not come naturally to humans. Since a person's thoughts and actions are driven by their nature, all those with a fallen nature are unable to love God, reverence Him or be obedient to Him. Praise God, this is not the case for Christians because we have been given a new nature and all spiritual blessings to enable us to worship our Creator and Savior.

The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

Up to this point, a Muslim or a Jew would have agreed with the *BF&M*'s description of God. However, to be Christian requires a Trinitarian understanding of God. Even so, it is easy to see how non-Trinitarian monotheists take issue with the Trinity because we talk about and think of the Persons as separate individuals. Many consider Christians to be polytheists. Of course, most of our doctrine of the Trinity comes from the New Testament, which is not part of the Quran or the Torah. In not knowing the NT Scriptures, they do err. We, as Christians, must be diligent to hold the Persons of the Trinity together in our hearts and minds. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are completely unified and can never disagree in even the minutest detail. They have always had just one eternal purpose, which we call "God's decree."

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

The Baptist Faith and Message:

II. God

This is as close as the *BF&M* comes to saying that God is sovereign. You will not find the word “sovereignty” or the phrase “God is sovereign” in the *BF&M*. The phrase “God’s sovereign goodness” is used later in Section V, but there it is tied to His benevolence rather than His control of all things. Kings can reign, and yet not be in control of their kingdoms. But God is sovereign in all things, having decreed from eternity whatsoever comes to pass. He is much more than a kindly omnipotent Caretaker overseeing his creation and willing to intervene if need be.

Conspicuously absent is any mentioning that the Father is also perfectly just. “He will by no means clear the guilty.” It is this attribute of justice that ultimately required Him to sacrifice His Son to atone for the sins of the elect. That God is all loving is absolutely true. However, He is also filled with wrath against the wicked. You may have heard it said that God loves the sinner and hates the sin. But, John 3:36 says, “Whosoever does not believe on the Son, the wrath of God abides on him.” The verse does not say God’s wrath abides on his sin. Sin is not damned to hell, sinners are. So, we need to understand that as much as He is all loving, He is also all wrathful. Being timid in regard to confessing the justice and wrath of God toward unbelievers does not help unbelievers come to Christ. Over-emphasizing the love of God will foster in them the idea that God will not punish them and serve to give them comfort in their sin.

The *BF&M* makes a distinction between “fatherly” and “Father in truth.” Every person is a creation of God and, for that reason, the Father exercises “fatherly” providential care over them. All of mankind benefits from the Father’s loving kindness through which He provides a time for every purpose under heaven. It is common to hear people say that everyone is a child of God. But, this is no truism. Only those persons who believe in the Lord and follow Him can claim the title “child of God” through adoption by faith into His family.