

Bibliology¹

(Doctrine of the Bible)

Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. – John 17:17

I. Designations for the Bible

A. “Bible”

1. Derived from the Greek word *biblion*.
2. A *biblion* referred to a roll of papyrus.
3. In the New Testament *biblion* simply means a roll or book.
4. The plural of *biblion* is *biblia*. All the Old Testament and New Testament books came to be called *ta biblia* “the books” by Greek speaking Christians.
5. Latin speaking Christians then borrowed the word *biblia*, but treated it as a singular noun, “Bible.”

B. “Scripture(s)”

Scripture (*graphe*) or Scriptures (*graphai*) is used in the New Testament to refer to the Old Testament as a whole and also parts of the New Testament.

as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. – 2 Peter 3:16

Bible originally referred to a particular kind of writing material. The word from which Scripture(s) is derived denotes the writings and not the material.

C. “Word of God”

1. Applied to both the Old and New Testament in written form (Mark 7:13; John 10:35). The Word of God revealed to John was put into written form.
2. Scriptures are rightly called, “The Word of God” because “All Scripture is God-breathed.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

II. Viewpoints concerning the Bible.

A. Rationalism².

¹ Henry W. Holoman, “Classroom Notes for Theology I,” Talbot Theological Seminary, 1982.

² Philosophical view that regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge.

1. Pure rationalism – denies the possibility of any supernatural revelation.
 2. Moderate rationalism.
 - a. Allows for the possibility of divine revelation.
 - b. Makes human reason the final judge of any divine revelation.
- B. Religious mysticism.
1. Teaching.
 - a. Direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality is attainable through immediate insight apart from sensory perception or divine revelation.
 - b. Scripture may be used in the religious mystic’s experience, but only as a secondary means into a subjective experience.
 2. Objections.

The subjectively oriented experience of the religious mystic:

 - a. Lacks the objective basis and control of Biblical revelation.
 - b. May be purely psychological or demonic.
- C. Neo-orthodoxy.
1. Teaching.
 - a. The Bible is a fallible witness to the revelation of God.
 - b. Scripture should not be equated with the word of God, but may become the word of God to a person.

Neo-orthodoxy holds that God speaks through the Scriptures and uses them as a means by which to communicate truth to us. Accordingly, the Bible becomes a channel of divine revelation much as a beautiful flower or a lovely sunset communicates the concept that God is the Creator. The Bible under this theory becomes true only as it is comprehended and truth is realized by the individual reader. The history of this view demonstrates that no two of its advocates exactly agree as to what the Bible actually teaches, and ... leaves the individual as the final authority concerning what is true and what is false.³
 2. Objections.

³ Lewis S. Chafer and John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 19.

- a. If the Bible is a fallible witness, then how can it be a true witness to Christ.
- b. Contradicts the claims of Christ.
 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)
 Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. – John 17:17
- c. Substitutes a subjective encounter for faith in the objective person and work of Christ.

D. Demythologization.

1. Teaching.

- a. The great miraculous events recorded in the Bible are not actually historical, but mythical (symbolic significance).
- b. The kernel of truth in the biblical message can be derived only by removing the mythical element that surrounds it.

2. Objections.

- a. De-emphasizes or denies the pervasive supernatural element in the Bible.
 Jesus replied, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? (Mark 12:24)
- b. Fails to see the Bible as divine revelation in propositional⁴ form which presents miraculous redemptive events as objective historical facts.

E. Cults.

1. The teachings or religious literature of the cult:

- a. Competes with the Bible for authority.
- b. Prescribes the teachings emphasized in the cult.
- c. Determines the interpretation of the Bible.

2. Objections.

- a. Cults tend to ignore the Scripture which refutes them.
- b. Cults twist other Scripture to fit their preconceived doctrines.

Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of

⁴ An expression in language or signs of something that can be believed, doubted, or denied or is either true or false.

these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. – 2 Peter 3:15-16

F. Orthodoxy (Evangelical).

The Bible is:

1. Inspired in a verbal, plenary (complete) sense.
2. Inerrant in the original texts.
3. Absolute and sole authority for Christian faith.

III. Need for the Bible.

The need for the Bible grows out of man's inability to know God in a personal, saving way apart from such divine revelation as that given in Scripture.

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. – 1 Corinthians 1:21

God has graciously chosen to meet this primary spiritual need of man by revealing Himself to man in a personal, redemptive way through Scripture.

A. Revelation: The act of God whereby He "has made known to men truths and realities which men could not discover for themselves."⁵

B. Types of Revelation.

1. General Revelation.

a. Definition of general revelation: God's revelation of divine truth apart from the Bible and through nature.

This form of revelation is sometimes called natural revelation because it is inherent in nature and the constitution of man.

b. Means of general revelation.

(1) Creation (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20): Reveals a mighty God.

(2) Conscience (Romans 2:15): Reveals a moral God.

(3) Providence (Acts 14:15-17; Matthew 5:45; Romans 2:4): Reveals a good God.

c. Limitation of general revelation.

⁵ Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 922.

(1) Knowledge of God that general revelation gives is very limited and is unable to give man a personal saving knowledge of God.

See 1 Corinthians 1:21; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15.

(2) Man naturally suppresses (Romans 1:18) and perverts (Romans 1:25) the truth presented to him in general revelation.

d. Purpose of general revelation.

(1) Negative purpose – to serve as an adequate basis for God’s universal condemnation of man.

See Romans 1:18-3:20.

(2) Positive purpose – to incite man to search for fuller knowledge of God and to discover His plan of salvation.

See 1 Chronicles 28:9; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7-8; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:7; Acts 8:26-40.

2. Special revelation.

a. Definition of special revelation: God’s revelation of divine truth through special acts and words, especially recorded in the Bible.

b. Means of special revelation.

(1) Through Scripture (John 17:17; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; Romans 15:4; Jude 3; Revelation 1:2, 11).

(2) Through Christ. Christ is God’s living truth.

(a) Christ is living truth. (John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:13).

(b) Christ is personal truth. (John 14:6).

(c) Christ is the ultimate truth. (Hebrews 1:1-3).

(3) Through prophecy.

(a) Definition: The predicting of events through direct communication with God.

(b) Distinction.

[1] All of the biblical prophet’s words spoken in the Lord’s name will be precisely fulfilled. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Psalm 22; Isaiah 37:33; Matthew 5:18).