

Cedarville University
Doctrinal White Paper
The Doctrine of God and Omniscience

The second article of the Cedarville University doctrinal statement states:

“We believe in one God (eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent) existing as three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one in nature, attributes, power, and glory. (Genesis 1:1,26; Proverbs 30:4; Mark 12:29; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; John 1:1-4, 14,18; Acts 5:3,4).”

The university, through the Board of Trustees, understands the above statement to include the notion that God knows all things whether past, present, or future, whether actual or potential. This is the normal understanding of classical theism. Louis Berkhof defines the knowledge of God as “that perfection of God whereby He, in an entirely unique manner, knows Himself and all things possible and actual in one eternal and most simple act.”¹

A. W. Tozer summarizes the doctrine of omniscience in the following paragraph:

“Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows nothing better than any other thing, but all things equally. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does he seek information or ask questions.”²

It is not possible for this view of God, as articulated in our doctrinal statement and as understood by the Board of Trustees, to be compatible with any view of God which limits His omniscience either by His own choice or by some external factor of contingency controlling Him. To hold that God cannot, or chooses to not know something is to stand outside of the intent and meaning of the doctrinal statement as written by its authors and as understood by those now entrusted with guaranteeing the theological integrity of the university. In the context of Jesus’ incarnation Christ’s knowledge can be understood as self-limited, as to his humanity (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

We know from Scripture that God knows all things that exist. Psalm 139:1-6 speak to God’s intimate knowledge of David; “You know when I sit down and when I stand up; you understand my thoughts from far away. You observe my travels and my rest; you are aware of all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know about it LORD.”

¹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (1939,1941) Grand Rapids, 66.

² A. W. Tozer. *Knowledge of the Holy*. (1978), New York, 62,63.

Scripture also indicates that God knows the future. In Matthew 6:8 Jesus indicates that “. . . your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.” And, in 1 John 3:20, John indicates that God “knows everything.”

While we teach and believe that God is both Transcendent and Immanent, the university’s position does not allow for a view which suggests that because of God’s immanence, He cannot know or He can choose to not know because it is demanded as a result of His relationship with His creation.³

Some would argue that God cannot possibly know all aspects of the future. They indicate that God cannot know the free acts of people which have not yet occurred. This approach to the knowledge possessed by God is incompatible with the position of the university.⁴

Further, the university’s position includes the doctrine of immutability whereby we affirm that: “. . . there is no change in His being, His attributes, His purpose, His motives of action, or His promises.”⁵ God’s decisions are not contingent on the attitudes, actions or assertions of mankind.

We agree with Millard Erickson when he states: “God however, has access to all information. So his judgments are made wisely. He never has to revise his estimation of something because of additional information.”⁶

Since the establishment of the university’s current doctrinal statement until the present, the clearly understood meaning of article two has included the commitment to the omniscience of God. The current Board of Trustees once more affirms that God is all-knowing in the sense expressed in classical theism. They consider all positions which limit God’s knowledge either by His own choice, or by external constraints to be incompatible with the Cedarville University Doctrinal Statement.

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³ Fred C. Smith, “Does Classical Theism Deny God’s Immanence?” (2003) Faculty Publications and Presentations. Paper 147 (http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/147),

⁴ See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (1994) Grand Rapids, 1190-193 and 315-331.

⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 59.

⁶ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (1985) Grand Rapids, 276.