

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.

September 2011

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.

Cedarville University
Doctrinal White Paper
The Doctrine of God and Creation

The fourth article of the Cedarville University doctrinal statement states:

“We believe in the literal 6-day account of creation, that the creation of man lies in the special, immediate, and formative acts of God and not from previously existing forms of life. Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7-9,16,17; 3:1-19.”

“We believe that man was created perfect in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also that spiritual and eternal death which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and we are sinners in thought, word, and deed. Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 1:18,32; 3:10-19; 5:12,19.”

While there has been debate within the Christian community over the centuries as to the exact nature of creation and human beginnings, Cedarville University has established that it is not compatible with the university’s doctrinal statement to argue for a Darwinian model of evolution. We affirm that God is the architect of the process whereby all that exists came into being and that Adam and Eve were the unique and special creation of God.

We concur with Louis Berkhof when he writes, “The creation of man is distinguished by the solemn counsel that precedes it: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’; and this is no wonder, since all that preceded was but a preparation for the coming of man, the crowning work of God, the king of creation; and because man was destined to be the image of God. . . .When it is said that man is created in the image of God, this means that God is the archetype of which man is the ectype; and when it is added that he is created according to the likeness of God, this merely adds the idea that this image is in every way like the original. In his entire being man is the very image of God.”¹

We affirm that key doctrines of the Christian faith are predicated upon this understanding of beginnings and to propose a substitute model of beginnings strikes at the core of Christian theology. The doctrines of human beings being created in the image of God, original sin, the need for redemption and the necessity of the death of Christ, the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:47) are all jeopardized. Both Jesus and Paul indicate that they believed in the historicity of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 5:12-14; 1 Timothy 2:13,14). Thus, to deny their existence brings into

¹ Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, 156,157.

question the foundational doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and the deity of Christ.

Positions which propose a common ancestry for primates and human beings are incompatible with article four of the Cedarville University doctrinal statement. As stated by Wayne Grudem, in relation to Genesis 2:23: "these texts are so explicit that it would be very difficult for someone to hold the complete truthfulness of Scripture and still hold that human beings are the result of a long evolutionary process."² Theistic evolution is also considered incompatible with the doctrinal statement of the university.

Since the establishment of the university's current doctrinal statement until the present, the clearly understood meaning of article four has included the commitment to the special creation of the first humans. The current Board of Trustees once more affirms that God, by a special act of creation, made Adam and Eve and that they did not share a common ancestry with primates. They consider all positions which endorse Darwinian evolution, or which deny the historicity of Adam and Eve to be incompatible with the Cedarville University Doctrinal Statement.

September 2011

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Grand Rapids, 265.

Cedarville University
Doctrinal White Paper
The Doctrine of Justification

The fifth article of the Cedarville University doctrinal statement states:

“We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice and rose again for our justification; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood and are saved by grace through faith wholly apart from human merit and works. (Acts 13:39; 16:31; Romans 3:21-28; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:3-8).”

The statement “. . . all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of his shed blood . . .” is understood by the Trustees to mean that justification is an accomplished reality at the point of faith. Those who believe and teach that the justification of the believer at the moment of faith is contingent upon later acts of righteousness or any action or activity in addition to faith cannot in good conscience declare themselves to be in agreement with article five of the doctrinal statement.

The biblical language of justification employs a legal metaphor and is used throughout Scripture to speak of the event whereby persons are set or declared to be in right relation to God.¹ It is appropriate to say, then, that Christians have been justified in the past. That is, when genuine believers convert to faith in Christ they are justified before God.

As Paul Enns states:

“All, who have come to God through faith have been fully justified at the moment of faith. To justify is to declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus Christ. It is a forensic (legal) act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous on the basis of the blood of Christ.”²

In agreement with Louis Berkhof, the Trustees understand that article five’s reference to justification and justified must be understood as a once for all event in the believer’s life. “It is not repeated, neither is it a process; it is complete at once and for all time. There is no more or less in justification; man is either fully justified or he is not justified at all.”³

In the Protestant understanding this declaration on the part of God is called forensic justification. Forensic justification, then, is a declaration, an act, that God makes

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine*, 723.

² Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 337.

³ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 513.

outside or apart from man. It is the judicial pronouncement of God about a sinful man that he, as a result of placing his faith in Christ, now stands before God having the status of justness. In brief, the sinful man has been officially declared pardoned by God and stands before God with the imputed (credited) righteousness of Christ (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:9;5:19).

In his commentary on Romans, F.F.Bruce writes the following in reference to Romans 3:24:

Paul's hope before he became a Christian, was that by dint of perseverance in observing the law of God, he might at length be pronounced righteous by God when he stood before His judgment-seat. But in this way of righteousness apart from the law, the procedure is reversed: God pronounces a man righteous at the beginning of his course, not the end of it. If He pronounces him righteous at the beginning of his course, it cannot be on the basis of works which he has not yet done . . .⁴

The Trustees concur with Bruce's reading of Romans 3:24 and express the conviction that those who would hold positions on justification which do not expressly communicate that justification in the believers life is an accomplished fact, or who argue that justification cannot be determined before some future judgment on the part of God, or who argue that good works of any kind are required in order to be justified stand outside of an acceptable understanding of the intent and meaning of article five of the Cedarville University doctrinal statement. The Trustees also affirm that good works are to be found in the believer's life and are evidence of true justification.

Since the establishment of the university's current doctrinal statement until the present, the clearly understood meaning of article five has included the commitment to the concept of forensic justification and the understanding that justification is an accomplished fact in the believer's life. The current Board of Trustees once more affirms that believers are declared righteous by God at the point of faith and that this act of declaring believers righteous is an accomplished reality for all believers. They consider all positions which are contrary to this understanding to be incompatible with the Cedarville University Doctrinal Statement.

September 2011

⁴ FF.Bruce, The Epsitle to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary. Grand Rapids, 1963, 103.