

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 26th June 2016

OUTLINE

<p>מוֹנֵה מִסְפָּר לַכּוֹכְבִּים לְכֹלֵם שְׁמוֹת יִקְרָא פּ גְּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב־כֹּחַ לְחַבּוֹנָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפָּר</p>	<p>Ps 147:4-5 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. ⁵ Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.</p>
<p>כִּי אֵל יְדוּת יְהוָה</p>	<p>1Sa 2:3 ...the LORD is a God of knowledge...</p>
<p>פְּלִיאָה יָדַעַת מִמֶּנִּי נִשְׁגָּבָה לֹא-אוּכַל לָהּ</p>	<p>Ps 139:1-6 O LORD, you have searched me and known me! ...you discern my thoughts from afar. ...Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. ...⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.</p>
<p>Heb 4:13 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανῆς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πάντα δὲ γυμνά καὶ τετραχλισμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος.</p>	<p>Heb 4:13 ...no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.</p>

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0. INTRODUCTION

[MARSHALL] “The Lord is not at all loved with that love that is due to Him as Lord of all, if He is not loved with all our heart, spirit and might. We are to love everything in Him, His justice, holiness, sovereign authority, all-seeing eye, and all His decrees, commands, judgements, and all His doings.”¹

0.1. THE “OMNI” ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- (1) omnipotence, (2) omniscience, (3) omnipresence

¹ MARSHALL, W. *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, Edinburgh : John Ogle, 1815, p. 16

[TOZER *The Knowledge of the Holy*] God perfectly knows Himself and, being the source and author of all things, it follows that He knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet unborn.

[CHARNOCK] God has an infinite knowledge and understanding. All knowledge. Omnipresence ...respects his essence; omniscience respects his understanding, according to our manner of conception.

0.2. HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE

- “What goes first, foreknowledge or predestination?” → in God there is no “go first”, he is outside of time and causality...
- **Rom 8:29-31** For those whom he **foreknew** he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he **predestined** he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- **1Pt 1:1-2** ...To those who are **elect** exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,² according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood...
- Erwin LUTZER: Predestination or Free Will: (1) Augustine vs. Pelagius (2) Luther vs. Erasmus (3) Calvin vs. Arminius (4) Whitefield vs. Wesley

0.3. RELATED PROBLEMS

- (1) Freedom of the will [certainty of future] (2) Theodicy [Why did he create?] (3) “Process theology” (computer-god)

1. GOD’S ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE

1.1. MACRO- AND MICRO-WORLDS

- Abraham: **Gn 15:5** And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
- **Jer 33:22** As the **host of heaven cannot be numbered** (לֹא יִסְפָּר) and **the sands of the sea cannot be measured** (לֹא יִמָּד), so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant,

- Ps 147:4 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

[KING, H.C. *The Background of Astronomy* p. 223] “Digges [?-1595] ...was an ardent Copernican, and in his treatise he made the idea of an **infinite number of stars** a logical corollary to the Copernican system.”

[GRANT, R. *History of Physical Astronomy*, p. 507] ...the year **1602**. The number of stars is 777. The epoch is 1600 A.D. From the labour and skill employed by **Tycho Brahe** in its construction, this catalogue was vastly more accurate than any other that had been hitherto executed. **Kepler** subsequently enlarged it from Tycho Brahe's observations to 1005 stars, and published it in the year 1627...

[CHARNOCK (1628–1680)] Yea, they cannot be numbered' (Jer 33 : 22); and the uncertainty of the opinions of men, evidenceth their ignorance of their number; some reckoning 1022; others 1025; others 1098; others 7000...

- Heb 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight (κτίσις ἀφανής)

- “atom” = “indivisible” → string theory

[GREENE, 2004] “And, in a more robust incarnation of superstring theory known as M-theory, unification requires ten space dimensions and one time dimension a cosmic substrate composed of a total of **eleven spacetime dimensions**. As we don't see these extra dimensions, superstring theory is telling us that we've *so far glimpsed but a meager slice of reality.*”²

² GREENE, B. *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, p. 18

1.2. PARADOXES

- Ps 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.
- knowledge without “calculation” (unlike chess player)
- knowledge without information (but it is NOT *Hinduism*)
- knowledge of the *unpredictable* events (chaos theory; quantum theory)
- no subject-object division (but it is NOT *Pantheism*)
- no increase in knowledge (but we CANNOT expel God from space-time reality)
- → Can God “unknow” something if he wishes so? (to *hide* something from himself)

1.3. JESUS’ KNOWLEDGE

- **Mt 24:36** "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only **Mk 13:32** But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
- **Phil 2:7** but made himself nothing (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

2. GOD’S KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE

2.1. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

[BAVINCK “*God’s Fatherly Care*“] **Creation** now passes into **preservation**. The two are so fundamentally distinct that they can be contrasted as labor and rest. At the same time they are so intimately related and bound up with each other that preservation itself can be called “creating” (Ps. 104:30)³

Is 48:1-8 Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right. ² For they call themselves after the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name. ³ "The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth and I announced them; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass. ⁴ Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass, ⁵ I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.' ⁶ "You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known. ⁷ They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.' ⁸ You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel.

2.2. NOT FATALISM!

Cicero regards Fate or Destiny as the decree of God, the dictum of Providence. But he supposes that it is essentially conditional, and it goes hand in hand with free-will, since free-will is one condition of Fate itself. He therefore agrees with the fathers of the first three centuries in their doctrine of free-will, so admirably explained by Erasmus and Leibnitz. While on one side he defends the decrees of Deity, on the other he defends the liberty of man in a qualified sense, and rescues his readers at once from impiety and fatalism.⁴

- Does God’s foreknowledge mean that the future is already fixed?
 - LERMONTOV *Fatalist* (a “trial” of predestination) → you are totally powerless to change your future (opposite to libertarianism, according to which your future is unknown even to God)
 - TOLSTOY “We are forced to fall back on fatalism as an explanation of irrational events (that is to say, events the reasonableness of which we do not understand).”⁵

³ BAVINCK, H. *Reformed Dogmatics II*, p. 592.

⁴ BARHAM, F. In *CICERO On Fate*, p. 264

⁵ *War and Peace* 9/1.

- Jonah's prediction in Nineveh → prediction uttered with the aim *not* to be fulfilled!

3. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF ME

3.1. TO KNOW GOD AND TO BE KNOWN BY HIM

- **Gal 4:9** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God...

[*Expositor's Bible Commentary*] It is characteristic of Paul's understanding of man's total spiritual depravity and of the electing grace of God that he corrects himself so as not to leave the impression that it is possible for any man to come to know God by his own efforts. The truth of the matter is that God comes to know us. That is, he takes the initiative in salvation with the result that we come to know him only because we are first known of him. Again, the word "known" does not refer to factual knowledge, for God always possesses that. It refers rather to the fact that through Christ the individual Christian has become an object of God's personal recognition and favor.

3.2. KNOWN AND LOVED

- **1Cor 14:25** ...the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God...
- **1Jn 3:20** ...**God** is greater than our heart, and he **knows everything**
- **John 4:39** Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." (εἶπέν μοι πάντα ἃ ἐποίησα.)
- **Rom 2:4** ...God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιάν σε ἄγει;)
- → **Rom 11:22** Note then the kindness and the severity of God (ἴδε οὖν **χρηστότητα** καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ)

4. TO REMEMBER

- We cannot explain how God's omniscience "works".
- We can completely rely on the fact that there are no surprises for God – he knows the future.
- We can rely on his knowledge of ourselves more than on our self-knowledge.