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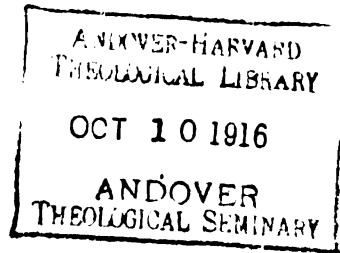
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to save in every place where from any danger or foe His people need salvation (Isa 43 2).

LITERATURE.—Oehler, *Theologie des AT*, 174 ff.; Riehm, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, 262 ff.; Dillmann, *Handbuch der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, 246 ff.; Davidson, *OT Theology*, 180 ff.; König, *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion*, 197 ff.

GEERHARDUS VOS

**OMNISCIENCE**, om-nish'ens: The term does not occur in Scripture, either in its nominal or in its adjectival form.

In the OT it is expressed in connection with such words as *דָּאֵחַ*, *da'ath*, *בִּינָה*, *binah*, *תְּבִינָה*, *tebhūnah*, *הִכְמָה*, *hokhmāh*; also "seeing" and "hearing," "the eye" and "the ear" occur as figures for the knowledge of God, as "arm," "hand," "finger" serve to express His power. In the NT are found *γινώσκειν*, *gínōskein*, *γνώσις*, *gnōsis*, *εἰδέναι*, *eidenai*, *σοφία*, *sophia*, in the same connections.

**1. Words and Usage** Scripture everywhere teaches the absolute universality of the Divine knowledge. In the historical books, although there is no abstract formula, and occasional anthropomorphic references to God's taking knowledge of things occur (Gen Affirmation 11 5; 18 21; Dt 8 3), none the less the principle is everywhere presupposed in what is related about God's cognizance of the doings of man, about the hearing of prayer, the disclosing of the future (1 S 16 7; 23 9-12; 1 K 8 39; 2 Ch 16 9). Explicit affirmation of the principle is made in the Psalter, the Prophets, the *hokhmāh* literature and in the NT. This is due to the increased internalizing of religion, by which its hidden side, to which the Divine omniscience corresponds, receives greater emphasis (Job 26 6; 28 24; 34 22; Ps 139 12; 147 4; Prov 15 3.11; Isa 40 26; Acts 1 24; He 4 13; Rev 2 23).

This absolute universality is affirmed with reference to the various categories that comprise within themselves all that is possible or actual. It extends to God's own being, as well as to what exists outside of Him in the created world. God has perfect possession in consciousness of His own being. The unconscious finds no place in Him (Acts 15 18; 1 Jn 1 5). Next to Himself God knows the world in its totality. This knowledge extends to small as well as to great affairs (Mt 6 8.32; 10 30); to the hidden heart and mind of man as well as to that which is open and manifest (Job 11 11; 34 21.23; Ps 14 2; 17 2 ff.; 33 13-18; 102 19 f.; 139 1-4; Prov 5 21; 15 3; Isa 29 15; Jer 17 10; Am 4 13; Lk 16 15; Acts 1 24; 1 Thess 2 4; He 4 13; Rev 2 23). It extends to all the divisions of time, the past, present and future alike (Job 14 17; Ps 56 8; Isa 41 22-24; 44 6-8; Jer 1 5; Hos 13 12; Mal 3 16). It embraces that which is contingent from the human viewpoint as well as that which is certain (1 S 23 9-12; Mt 11 22.23).

Scripture brings God's knowledge into connection with His omnipresence. Ps 139 is the clearest expression of this. Omniscience is the mode of omnipresence of cognition (Jer 23 the Divine Knowledge 23 ff). It is also closely related to God's eternity, for the latter makes Him in His knowledge independent of the limitations of time (Isa 43 8-12). God's creative relation to all that exists is represented as underlying His omniscience (Ps 33 15; 97 9; 139 13; Isa 29 15). His all-comprehensive purpose forms the basis of His knowledge of all events and developments (Isa 41 22-27; Am 3 7).

This, however, does not mean that God's knowledge of things is identical with His creation of them, as has been suggested by Augustine and others. The act of creation, while necessarily connected with

the knowledge of that which is to be actual, is not identical with such knowledge or with the purpose on which such knowledge rests, for in God, as well as in man, the intellect and the will are distinct faculties. In the last analysis, God's knowledge of the world has its source in His self-knowledge. The world is a revelation of God. All that is actual or possible in it therefore is a reflection in created form of what exists uncreated in God, and thus the knowledge of the one becomes a reproduction of the knowledge of the other (Acts 17 27; Rom 1 20). The Divine knowledge of the world also partakes of the quality of the Divine self-knowledge in this respect, that it is never dormant. God does not depend for embracing the multitude and complexity of the existing world on such mental processes as abstraction and generalization.

The Bible nowhere represents Him as attaining to knowledge by reasoning, but everywhere as simply knowing. From what has been said about the immanent sources of the Divine knowledge, it follows that the latter is not a posteriori derived from its objects, as all human knowledge based on experience is, but is exercised without receptivity or dependence. In knowing, as well as in all other activities of His nature, God is sovereign and self-sufficient. In cognizing the reality of all things He needs not wait upon the things, but draws His knowledge directly from the basis of reality as it lies in Himself. While the two are thus closely connected it is nevertheless of importance to distinguish between God's knowledge of Himself and God's knowledge of the world, and also between His knowledge of the actual and His knowledge of the possible. These distinctions mark off the theistic conception of omniscience from the pantheistic idea regarding it. God is not bound up in His life with the world in such a sense as to have no scope of activity beyond it.

Since Scripture includes in the objects of the Divine knowledge also the issue of the exercise of freewill on the part of man, the problem arises, how the contingent character of such decisions and the certainty of the Divine knowledge can coexist. It is true that the knowledge of God and the purposing will of God are distinct, and that not the former

but the latter determines the certainty of the outcome. Consequently the Divine omniscience in such cases adds or detracts nothing in regard to the certainty of the event. God's omniscience does not produce but presupposes the certainty by which the problem is raised. At the same time, precisely because omniscience presupposes certainty, it appears to exclude every conception of contingency in the free acts of man, such as would render the latter in their very essence undetermined. The knowledge of the issue must have a fixed point of certainty to terminate upon, if it is to be knowledge at all. Those who make the essence of freedom absolute indeterminateness must, therefore, exempt this class of events from the scope of the Divine omniscience. But this is contrary to all the testimony of Scripture, which distinctly makes God's absolute knowledge extend to such acts (Acts 2 23). It has been attempted to construe a peculiar form of the Divine knowledge, which would relate to this class of acts specifically, the so-called *scientia media*, to be distinguished from the *scientia necessaria*, which has for its object God Himself, and the *scientia libera* which terminates upon the certainties of the world outside of God, as determined by His freewill. This *scientia media* would then be based on God's foresight of the outcome of the free choice of man. It would involve a knowledge of receptivity, a contribution to the sum total of what God

knows derived from observation on His part of the world-process. That is to say, it would be knowledge a posteriori in essence, although not in point of time. It is, however, difficult to see how such a knowledge can be possible in God, when the outcome is psychologically undetermined and undeterminable. The knowledge could originate no sooner than the determination originates through the free decision of man. It would, therefore, necessarily become an a posteriori knowledge in time as well as in essence. The appeal to God's eternity as bringing Him equally near to the future as to the present and enabling Him to see the future decisions of man's free will as though they were present cannot remove this difficulty, for when once the observation and knowledge of God are made dependent on any temporal issue, the Divine eternity itself is thereby virtually denied. Nothing remains but to recognize that God's eternal knowledge of the outcome of the freewill choices of man implies that there enters into these choices, notwithstanding their free character, an element of predetermination, to which the knowledge of God can attach itself.

The Divine omniscience is most important for the religious life. The very essence of religion as communion with God depends on His

**6. Religious** all-comprehensive cognizance of the importance of man at every moment. Hence it is characteristic of the irreligious to deny the omniscience of God (Ps 10 11.12; 94 7-9; Isa 29 15; Jer 23 23; Ezk 8 12; 9 9). Esp. along three lines this fundamental religious importance reveals itself: (a) it lends support and comfort when the pious suffer from the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of men; (b) it acts as a deterrent to those tempted by sin, esp. secret sin, and becomes a judging principle to all hypocrisy and false security; (c) it furnishes the source from which man's desire for self-knowledge can obtain satisfaction (Ps 19 12; 51 6; 139 23.24).

LITERATURE.—Oehler, *Theologie des AT*, 876; Riehm, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, 263; Dillmann, *Handbuch der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, 249; Davidson, *OT Theology*, 180 ff.

GEERHARDUS VOS

**OMRI**, om'ri (עֲמִרִי, 'omri; LXX Ἀμρί, Ambri; Assyrian 'Humri' and 'Humria'):

(1) The 6th king of Northern Israel, and founder of the IIId Dynasty which reigned for nearly 50 years. Omri reigned 12 years, c 887-876 BC. The historical sources of his reign are contained in 1 K 16 15-28; 20 34, the M S, Assyrian inscriptions, and in the published accounts of recent excavations in Samaria. In spite of the brief passage given to Omri in the OT, he was one of the most important of the military kings of Northern Israel.

O. is first mentioned as an officer in the army of Elah, which was engaged in the siege of the Philistia town of Gibbethon. While O. was thus engaged, Zimri, another officer

**1. His Accession** of Elah's army, conspired against the king, whom he assassinated in a drunken debauch, exterminating at the same time the remnant of the house of Baasha. The conspiracy evidently lacked the support of the people, for the report that Zimri had usurped the throne no sooner reached the army at Gibbethon, than the people proclaimed O., the more powerful military leader, king over Israel. O. lost not a moment, but leaving Gibbethon in the hands of the Philistines, he marched to Tirzah, which he besieged and captured, while Zimri perished in the flames of the palace to which he had set fire with his own hands (1 K 16 18). O., however, had still another opponent in Tibni the son of Ginath, who laid claim to the throne, and who was supported in his claims by his

brother Joram (1 K 16 22 LXX) and by a large number of the people. Civil war followed this rivalry for the throne, which seems to have lasted for a period of four years (cf 1 K 16 15, with vs 23 and 29) before O. gained full control.

O.'s military ability is seen from his choice of Samaria as the royal residence and capital of the Northern Kingdom. This step may have been suggested to O. by his own easy conquest of Tirzah, the former capital. Accordingly, he purchased the hill Shomer on of Shemer for two talents of silver, about \$4,352.00 in American money. The conical hill, which rose from the surrounding plain to the height of 400 ft., and on the top of which there was room for a large city, was capable of easy defence.

The superior strategic importance of Samaria is evidenced by the sieges it endured repeatedly by the Syrians and Assyrians. It was finally taken by Sargon in 722, after the siege had lasted for 3 years. That the Northern Kingdom endured as long as it did was due largely to the strength of its capital. With the fall of Samaria, the nation fell.



Palace of Omri and Ahab at Samaria.

Recent excavations in Samaria under the direction of Harvard University throw new light upon the ancient capital of Israel. The first results were the uncovering of massive foundation walls of a large building, including a stairway 80 ft. wide. This building, which is Roman in architecture, is supposed to have been a temple, the work of Herod. Under this Roman building was recovered a part of a massive Hebrew structure, believed to be the palace of O. and Ahab. During the year 1910 the explorations revealed a building covering 1½ acres of ground. Four periods of construction were recognized, which, on archaeological grounds, were tentatively assigned to the reigns of O., Ahab, Jehu, and Jeroboam II. See SAMARIA and articles by David G. Lyon in *Harvard Theological Review*, IV, 1911; *JBL*, V, xxx, Part I, 1911; *PEFS*, 1911, 79-83.

Concerning O.'s foreign policy the OT is silent beyond a single hint contained in 1 K 20 34.

**3. His Foreign Policy** Here we learn that he had to bow before the stronger power of Syria. It is probable that Ben-hadad I besieged Samaria shortly after it was built, for he forced O. to make "streets" in the city for the Syrians. It is probable, too, that at this time Ramoth-gilead was lost to the Syrians. Evidently O. was weakened in his foreign policy at the beginning of his reign by the civil conflict engendered by his accession. However, he showed strength of character in his dealings with foreign powers. At least he regained control over the northern part of Moab, as we learn from the M S. Lines 4-8 tell us that "Omri was king of Israel and afflicted Moab many days because Chemosh was angry with his land. . . . Omri obtained possession of the land of Medeba and dwelt therein during his days and half the days of his son, forty years."

O. was the first king of Israel to pay tribute to the Assyrians under their king Asurnacirpal III,