

# “THE ALL-KNOWING GOD”. OLD TESTAMENT AND HELLENISTIC METAPHORS IN THE GENRE OF NEW TESTAMENT APOCALYPTIC

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ABSTRACT. Apocalyptic literature has stood apart from other genre especially because of its emphasis on metaphors, symbolism and cryptic language. At even a cursory look, one will notice that the book of Revelation made use to the fullest of these data. What scholars would expect to see less in such genre is the imagery of God as an “all-knowing” searcher of the hearts and thoughts. In the book of Revelation there are two major texts that employ this motif. In chapters 2 and 3 God appears as the divinity who “knows” virtually all deeds, attitudes, and in particular, the *thoughts of the heart* of the seven churches from Asia Minor. Evidently, one would ask whether this language belongs to the classical apocalyptic literature, and what are the sources that inspired the author of Revelation? The Bible uses a wide spectrum of verbs and nouns to convey the idea that God has comprehensive knowledge of human thoughts and actions. These grammatical terms describe physical organs, physiological and mental or spiritual operations. In this article we will trace the terminology of the concept of “divine all-knowledge” to three major (possible) sources: the Old Testament, Greek/Hellenistic and Jewish Hellenistic texts. In particular, we will want to know what was the original context in which these concepts were used? Second, we will want to ask to what extent the author of Revelation was influenced by these sources and what was the meaning that he gave to the notion of “divine all-knowledge”?

KEY WORDS: Apocalypse, New Testament, metaphor, Hellenistic text

## **The biblical background of Revelation 2-3**

The passages that contain the motif of “divine all-knowledge” in the book of Revelation fall in the category of the seven pronouncements that Jesus Christ issued to the seven churches of Asia Minor. First, each pronouncement follows a pattern that addresses the following criteria: the name of the church, the identity and attributes of the speaker (Jesus Christ), the content of the knowledge of the speaker, a pronouncement on the fate of the church, and a closing formula of warning (“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says...”) (D. Aune, 1997: 119-30).<sup>1</sup> What concerns us in par-

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1 Concerning the literary form of the seven pronouncements, Aune argues that these sentences follow a pattern of “imperial edicts” typical of Roman culture.

ticular is the aspect of the “content” that describes the “knowledge” of Jesus about each particular church.

Second, in Revelation 2:23 the author uses the expression “I am he who searches the mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.” Concerning the first group of texts, the description of each church begins with the formula “I know”. In each case the author uses the verb *oida* followed by a detailed description of the object of knowledge. However, in 2:23, the author uses a verb of “searching” that could be traced to the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. To clarify the meaning of each group of texts, we will list the summary forms of the pronouncements introduced by the verbs. We will then analyze the meaning of the verbs and their larger Scriptural and context.

### The Verb *oida*

Reference	Church Recipient	Object of Knowledge
2:2	Ephesus	deeds, toil, endurance
2:9	Smyrna	tribulation and poverty
2:13	Pergamum	dwelling place
2:19	Thyatira	deeds, love, faith, service, patience endurance
3:1	Sardis	deeds
3:8	Philadelphia	deeds
3:15	Laodicea	deeds

The verb *oida* (with variations *oido/eidomai*) is a word that describes the notion of “knowing” in a very general sense (H. Seesemann in G. Keittel, 1964: 116-19; D. Aune, 1997: 134).<sup>2</sup> It occurs in approximately 320 passages in the New Testament and it takes human, angelic and divine subjects. In this sense, one can “know” someone personally, know about a person or a situation, or “grasp the meaning” of a unique reality (see *oida* in W. Bauer and F. W. Danker, 2013). In our case, the subject of the verb is Jesus Christ, who addresses each of the seven churches. If in the New Testament the verb does not suggest (particularly) a unique aspect of the act of “knowing”, the content of the seven pronouncements does. As is evident from the table above, what Jesus Christ knows are both visible and invisible realities. This means that it is not the verb itself, but its subject that gives the verb in these passages a unique function. We have called this an “all-knowledge” motif,

<sup>2</sup> Particularly, Aune points out that *oida* expresses a state of knowledge with little or no reference to how that knowledge was acquired.

not because of the verb itself, but because the subject of the verb assumes knowledge “of all the affairs upon the earth” (D. Aune, 1997: 143). One will note that Jesus Christ knows both external realities (deeds and places) and inward experiences (patience and love).

The New Testament affirms this function of the verb elsewhere, when it describes Jesus’ “ability to fathom people’s thoughts”.<sup>3</sup> As we will argue later, we believe that the New Testament concept of divine “all-knowledge” is rooted primarily in the witness of the Old Testament. Now, to convey the act of “divine knowledge” the Old Testament employs other verbs as well. Most often, the texts use the Hebrew *yada* with this sense and in a similar context. One should note, however, that the Greek translators of Hebrew text chose the verb *ginosko*, not *oida/eido*, to render the Hebrew *yada* (A. Botica, 2007: 123; *ginosko* in R. Bultmann quoted in Kittel, 1964: 689-719; *Yada* in G. J. Botterweck, 1986: 448-81; *yada* in Fretheim quoted in Van Generem, 2001).<sup>4</sup>

Even though in terms of occurrences *ginosko* had more frequently the sense of divine “all-knowledge”, the Old Testament also employed *oida* with a similar meaning. In Proverbs 24:12, God, who knows (*ginosko*) the heart of all, also “knows” (*oida*) all things. The author of Job 11:8 has God pointing to Job that he does not “know” (*oida*) the “deeper things” that, apparently, only God can know. Similarly, God “knows” (*oida*) the “works of transgressors” (Job 11:11) and the “origin of wisdom” (28:23). God is able to weigh the deeds of Job and thus “know” his “innocence” (31:6). Given this semantic range, we can grasp better the meaning of the verb *oida* in the seven pronouncements of Revelations 2-3. That is, God has “all-knowledge” that, for all purposes, He will use to evaluate both inward and outward realities in the life of the churches.

The second passage that focuses on the theme of divine “all-knowledge” is Revelation 2:23. Unlike the seven occurrences that we have just analyzed, here the text describes the notion of divine “searching” of the “mind and the heart”. In essence, the concept of “searching” conveys a meaning similar to that of “knowing”, especially considering the fact that what God searches is the *mind* and the *heart* of humans. Both verbs target the same phenomenon, namely, divine “all-knowledge”.

3 *Oida*, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, for Jesus “knowing” the “thoughts” of the Pharisees (Mat 12:25), their “hypocrisy” (Marc 12:15), what “they were thinking” (Luke 6:8), and the “grumbings” of the disciples (John 6:61).

4 Botterweck “relates the aspect of divine knowledge of the thoughts to the realms of cult (worship) and law (justice).” In this context, the worshipper “calls on God for justice, based on his knowledge of the heart (Ps 44:21; cf. Job 31:6; Ps 40:10; Jer 12:3).” For the idea of God “knowing” realities that are inaccessible to humans, see Deut 8:2; cf. 13:3; Jud 3:4; Ps 139:23.

In Classical and Hellenistic Greek sources, the verb appears with both literal and figurative meanings (see *ereunao* in G. Delling quoted in Kittel, 1964: 655-57). For example, one could “search” possessions or the house for a certain item. One could also “investigate” a matter, “search out” the meaning of a statement or “inquire” into a theoretical problem. Plato used the concept in the context of philosophical examinations. In the figurative sense, the verb conveys the sense of “searching” a reality that goes beyond the power of human perception. As early as Pindar (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), *ereunao* described the diligent (and apparently futile) search of men to find the will of the gods. As we have indicated so far, for the most part the verb takes a human subject and the act of “searching” can be physical, intellectual or spiritual/religious. We will see later why this aspect has a special significance to understanding the passage in the book of Revelation.

In the Septuagint, *ereunao* translates the Hebrew verb *hps*, which means to “search out” or “examine” (A. Botica, 2007: 116; for G. H. Matties, “hps”, quoted in Van Generem, 2001: 252-55). In the Old Testament this verb works with physical objects (Gen 31:35; 44:12), *persons* (1Sam 23:23), or abstract entities like *injustice* (Ps 64:7) and *wisdom* (Pro 2:4). Furthermore, the conceptual range of *hps* “is flexible enough to include inward elements like the ‘spirit’ (Ps 77:6) and the ‘innermost chambers.’” Thus Proverbs 20:27, where the subject is the “spirit of man” that plays the role of the “lamp of the Lord”, searching all his innermost parts. If our analysis of the usage of *ereunao* in classical Greek is correct, it follows that the Septuagint invested the verb with a meaning that did not appear in the Classic or Hellenistic sources. That is, God has the ability to search out realities that remain inaccessible to humans.

And one may draw this conclusion from the data of New Testament as well. True, the authors of the New Testament used *ereunao* with the general sense of “searching” the Scriptures or the ministry of the prophets of the Old Testament (John 7:52; 1Pet 1:11). But *ereunao* points not only to human, but to divine searching as well. In addition to Revelation 2:23, one should note Romans 8:27, where he “who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit.” Likewise, in 1Corinthians 2:10, Paul explains that “the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” We may conclude, then, that Revelation 2:23 reflects the Old Testament understanding of God as a divine “searcher”; as an “all-knowing” God.

### **The Wider Background of the Theme of Divine Knowledge and Searching**

The passages that we have analyzed so far describe particular and often different historical situations. However, the unifying criterion that makes them critical to our analysis is the fact that “the object of the verbs ‘test-

ing/examining’ is the *inward thoughts and intentions*” (A. Botica, 2007: 112). At a closer analysis, it appears that this emphasis on “interiority” forms a recurring pattern in the Bible. If this is true, then one may ask what is the significance of this motif in the Bible in general, and how does this phenomenon explain the meaning of the passages from the book of Revelation?

First, some scholars understood the motif as a *religious/theological* theme underlying the divine attributes of knowledge, perception, and omniscience. As we have noted, “this appears to be the case both in narrative texts like 1Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, as well as in prophetic and wisdom passages from Jeremiah, Job, and Proverbs” (A. Botica, 2007: 119).<sup>5</sup> It is true that in some of these passages one may detect what we will show later to be a *juridical* approach to the concept of “divine searching. However, in the current setting, “they reflect the preoccupations of the authors with *religious/theological and ethical* issues outside the cult” (E. Würthwein, 1957: 165-82; A. Weiser, 1962: 802-09; H.-J. Krauss 1, 1988: 204; E. S. Gerstenberger, 2001: 79). Thus scholars have pointed out parallels between this motif in the Bible and in the ancient Near Eastern texts; in particular, texts depicting the solar deities and the “weighing of the heart” in Egyptian religion (K. van der Toorn, 1998: 434-35; R. Pettazzoni, 1956: 77-88; Gerstenberger, 2001: 515; Currid, 1996: 217 ff; Taylor, 2001: 35 ff; O. Keel, 1978: 184-185; J. H. Hogg, 1911: 59-60).<sup>6</sup>

Second, the motif of “divine testing” has also been interpreted from a moral/cultic standpoint, as a *prayer-formula* to be recited before entering the temple gate. In this context the worshippers participated in what scholars call “gate liturgy”, which was “a ritual intended to prevent one from approaching the holy in gross impurity” (Keel, 1978: 183, and Ps. 11:4-5, 7 (“His eyes see, his eyelids test...”).

Third, and in close proximity to point number two, another avenue of interpretation has emerged from the practice of the “cultic ordeal”. In essence, the Temple “may have served as a judicial forum for cases that could not be adjudicated at the level of the local courts” (thus Deut 17:8, “If a matter of justice is too difficult for you”) (A. Botica, 2007: 110). A number of scholars have argued that “the process also included an *oath*” (cf. 1Ki

5 For 1Sam 16:7; 1Ki 8:38-40; 1Chr 28:9; 29:17-18; 2Chr 6:30, and second, Jer 11:20; 12:3; 17:9; 20:12; Job 7:17-18; 13:9; Prov 15:11; 16:2; 17:3; 20:27; 21:2; 24:12.

6 Van der Toorn characterizes the ANE solar deities as gods of justice with intimate knowledge of the inward world of humans. Note also Pettazzoni for texts describing Anu, Enlil, Ea, Sin, Marduk, and Shamash, also Gerstenberger for Egyptian parallels. These are sources that describe gods such as Amon, the “searcher of the body, who opens the hearts”, and Sia, “who knows the inner parts of the body.” Also O. Keel for the ritual of “haruspicy” in relation to “divine examination” of the heart (Ps 139:23-24).

8:31ff.), which “came in force when the courts had to admit their own inability to administer justice.” Having the person take the oath meant that he or she submitted to the searching of God (Phillips, 148; “for the ‘oath’ as a transfer of jurisdiction to God”, and for the general background of the ordeal process: Gerstenberger, 2001: 513; Van der Toorn, 1998: 429; Würthwein, 1957: 165-82).

As Gerstenberger, Krauss, and others noted, the motif of *divine examination* served as “an element of the ‘doxology of judgment’, in which ‘a person unconditionally submits to the procedure of the deity, namely, by confessing the unsearchable omnipotence of God in a doxological hymn’” (Krauss 1, 1988: 173; Krauss 2, 1965: 217). This experience could be interpreted both as a “judgment of the conscience of the sinner and the ‘proclamation of innocence’ for the one falsely accused”, even though Schmidt restricted this “to the prayer of the person who was accused falsely” and who now calls for a “legal resolution on his innocence” (for Ps 7:10, Schimdt, 1934: 13, and Delekat, 1967: 63; for Ps 17:3, Beyerlin, 1970: 106, 102-03, 107, 118). For Schmidt (26), Beyerlin (107), and Krauss (132), the “sacral process of judgment” consists simply in spending the night in the temple and receiving the verdict in the morning. As Van der Toorn and McKane argued, the ordeal was based on the belief that “the party that survived the test through the night (drinking a mixture of wine and poison) was deemed innocent.” Nevertheless, even though this scenario may have some support within the Old Testament traditions, the interpretations involve a degree of speculation. This is why disagreements still remain (A. Boica, 2007: 111, and he references to the reviews of Eaton, Hasel, and Tourney).

Fourth, the connection “between *inward morality* (as intentions/attitudes) and societal *relations* and *well-being*” has been observed to work in Wisdom literature as well. For example, Perdue noticed a tendency toward “dualism between *deeds* and *inward piety/morality*”. According to the sages, God would evaluate the (inward) “disposition of the petitioner” because one can use “both prayer and sacrifice in deceitful ways” (A. Botica, 2007: 103-104; Perdue, 1977: 155 ff., 240)<sup>7</sup>. We must also note that “inwardness was only the concern of the sages, but not of the official priests” is not correct.<sup>8</sup> Also,

7 Perdue noted “that in the view of ancient Israel, not only did sacrifices have to be brought in the right way, but ‘the intention of the heart of important.’”

8 Please note the fact that Prov 21:27 uses idioms characteristic of cultic literature (e.g., the Hebrew *toevah*, with reference to homosexual acts [Lev 18:22; 20:13] and *zimah* with reference to sexual sins [Lev 18:17; 19:29; 20:14]). One should also take into account Ps 15 and 24, “where the admission of the worshipper into the Temple depended on his or her pure heart.” Likewise, to convey the notion of *intention* in “non-action cases, the Bible uses not only idioms from cultic texts (e.g., Leviticus), but also from

for Kovacs the author of Proverbs viewed “social responsibility in terms of *dispositions, attitudes, and intentions, not only deeds*” (Kovacs, 1978: 179, 182).<sup>9</sup> Another author who has probed this phenomenon in Wisdom literature is Fox, who noted that a number of passages in the book of Proverbs (esp. 3:1-12) “are primarily concerned with shaping attitudes” (Fox, 2002: 154-55, 244; Farmer, 1991: 175, 199).<sup>10</sup> In his view, even though the “hope of the authors is to inculcate right actions”, often time they stressed the imperative of having rights attitudes, “feelings and mental dispositions, rather than deeds”. It has been the consensus of these authors that the motif of “divine searching” was based on the premise that “holiness and purity have an essential *inward* aspect, accessible only to God” (J. Gammie, 1989: 127ff.; A. Botica, 2007: 104).

Another genre of biblical literature that includes the motif of divine examination is Prophetic Literature. Primarily, scholars have traced this topic to the writings of Jeremiah. As we have shown elsewhere, the prophet understood the human heart as the “medium of inward offenses (4:14-18; 9:7; 12:2). It was in this context that he argued for the necessity of “divine examination” of the thoughts of the heart (11:20; 12:3; 17:9; 20:12) (see J. Holladay, 1986, 1989; R. Carroll, 1986: 280ff; W. McKane, 1986: 253ff; P. Kelley, 1991:177; F. Huey, 1993: 137; J. Walton in Logos Library System). In this sense, Lundbom noted in prophetic literature the view that Yahweh alone “is able to look into the human heart, plumb its depths, test it, and come up with an equitable judgment regarding it”, see J. Lundbom, 1999: 788). In his view this was not a “concern with theodicy, but a classic prophetic call to *judgment*.” In other words, it expressed the condemnation against those “who falsely claim to speak for Yahweh.” Evidently other prophetic books shared Jeremiah’s view of divine examination. Perhaps the (human) reason why Jeremiah depicted God in this posture, more than the other prophets, was his unique experience. Jeremiah not only had a long

criminal law” There are many terms employed in Wisdom, Poetic, and Prophetic literature that could be used both in the legal/religious and the moral/ethical contexts.

9 Kovacs applied this argument to situations that described everyday “religious and cultic issues”. As such, “right intentionality constitutes the sine qua non of prayer and sacrifice” (cf. Prov 15:8; 21:27).

10 It is true that such attitudes will “inevitably lead to actions, but for the present the author of Proverbs focuses on attitudes and moral character.” In this sense, Fox reveals the case of the “Strange Woman” who is “of hidden mind, of a concealed nature”. In other words, she is the opposite of a “pious frame of mind.” It is this attitude, then, that makes her all the more dangerous, “when her thoughts and intentions are evil.” Farmer, too, has argued that in the book of Proverbs, morality is defined “not only in terms of actions, but of intentions as well.” More specifically, the “test of righteousness or wickedness applies to the inward life, as the Lord judges intentions as well as deeds”.

prophetic ministry, but a turbulent one as well. Of all the references that he makes about divine examination, most of them arise out of Jeremiah's concern that the people who persecute him, and who sinned against God, will escape unpunished.

### **Divine Searching/All-knowledge and the Human Heart**

Now, to understand the phenomenon of divine "all-knowledge" better, one must consider not only the verbs of "knowing" and "searching", but also the objects of the verbs: specifically, the organs or internal functions of human beings. We have noted so far that the idea of God searching the heart has a rich background in the literature of Old Testament. This is so because the human "heart" is arguably one of the most important theological concepts the Bible (see A. Botica, 2007: 117-19; I. Nowell quoted in H. Luckman and L. Kulzer, 1999: 17; Robinson in A. S. Peake, 1925: 362-64).<sup>11</sup> The term appears often in verses that describe the act of "searching" or "examining". The reason for this examination is that the heart engages in malice, injustice, hypocritical worship and evil thoughts. The evil thoughts of the heart pose problems not only to human relationships, but also to the relationship between humans and God. Note the following situations:

"If I had thought evil in my heart, the Lord would not listen to my prayer" (Ps 66:18)

"They speak words of peace to their friends, but have *malice* in their *heart*" (Ps 28:3)

"'Eat and drink' (he says to you) but his heart is not with you" (Prov 23:7)

"They honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (29:13)

"The *intention* of the thoughts of the *heart* is only evil" (Gen 6:5; 8:21)

Based on the witness of these passages, we may conclude that in the Old Testament the heart functions both as a *biological* organ and a *spiritual/emotional/volitive/intellectual* apparatus. The heart is able to conceive plans and intentions, but it is also scrutinized by God (A. Botica, 2007: 117-21; R. North, 1993: 577-97 identifies the "brain" and the "nerve functions" with

11 Botica notices Fabry's classification of "lev" from an *anthropological* perspective, where the heart is "strong" (Isa 46:12), "powerful" (Ezek 2:4), and "faint" (Ps 61:3), to the *noetic*: "understanding" (1Ki 3:12), "knowing" (Prov 14:10), "wise" (Prov 16:23), "pondering" (Prov 15:28), "senseless" (Prov 15:21), *emotional*: "cheerful" (Prov 17:22), "rejoicing" (Ps 105:3), "trembling" (Job 37:1), "fearful" (Isa 35:4), "dreading" (1Sam 28:5), and *ethical*: "good" (Eccl 9:7), "evil" (Prov 26:23), "be haughty" (Prov 18:12), "be false" (Hos 10:2), "go after idols" (Ez 20:16; Job 31:7); also Nowell's "interesting dimension of the heart as a source of impurity"; see also his own mention of the "heart" with *physical, psychological, intellectual, ethical, and existential* meanings (citing Stolz and Robinson for the "heart" denoting *inner life, emotion, will*).

the heart; North, 1995: 33 points out that ancient Israelites had “no word for brain and did not associate thinking with the head.” Instead, the heart took on these functions; see also R. Johnson, 1949: 77; Glasson, 1970: 247-48; Robinson, “Hebrew Psychology”, in A. S. Peake, 1925: 253). Thus God tests the kidneys (emotions) and the heart of the person who was accused falsely (Jer 11:20; cf. 12:3; 17:9; 20:12). He also *searches*, *tests* and *weighs* the heart of the worshipper (Ps 7:10; cf. 17:3; 26:2; 139:1, 23; Prov 21:2; cf. 15:11; 16:2; 17:3; 20:27) and knows the secrets of the heart in general (Ps 44:22; cf. Job 7:17-18).

Evidently, a number of scholars have asked whether it is proper to emphasize the preoccupation of the Old Testament with the thoughts of the heart. This question reflects the belief that, for some, the Old Testament deals with legal and practical concerns more than with inner spirituality and introspection. We have argued elsewhere that reading the Old Testament from a materialistic perspective alone is both unjust to its cultural/religious ethos and incorrect from the perspective of a sound methodology. The Old Testament lists a wide spectrum of cases as it deals both with legal and spiritual matters.

In some of these, both the act and the intention formed the basis for judgment or praise. In others, the act was linked to the intention, but the basis for judgment or praise was primarily the intention. In yet other cases, whether on the *human-divine* level (*piety*), the level of *social interactions* (ethics), or—as was the case more than once—the mixed cases of ethics and piety—only the *intent/inward predisposition*, not the physical act (which could be praise-worthy), was held liable or was praised. We have...demonstrated that more often than not it was the factor of “divine calculation”, not the human court, which made this evaluation critical. One may say that the Bible portrays God, above all, as intently preoccupied with the inward life of human beings. It appears that the question of the *appraisal of intent* in the absence of the expressed physical action (its praiseworthiness or blameworthiness) becomes more a *theological* problem, and less a *legal* one (A. Botica, 2007: 174).

One of the examples that embody this dualism comes from Psalm 24:2-4:

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

One will notice that the Psalmist takes into account both the “hands” and the “heart” of the worshippers. This is not untypical for the Bible. As a number of scholars have argued, the expression “clean hands and a pure

heart” points to the “totality of moral/religious life” (E. Otto, 1994: 98ff; B. Gemser, 1968: 78-95; W. Kaiser, 1986: 8).<sup>12</sup> Granted, this passage describes a cultic situation. We have indicated, however, that the Old Testament considers the criterion of inwardness not only from a religious/cultic perspective, but also from a legal, social and inter-personal one (R. E. Clements, 1996: 220-21, who points to the perspective of the authors of Proverbs, for whom harboring “evil intentions” has adverse social consequences).

### **The Greco-Roman and the Jewish Hellenistic Background to the Theme of Divine All-knowledge**

So far we have argued for a biblical religious and linguistic background for the motif of divine “all-knowledge”. This does not mean that this theme appears only in biblical sources. As we have argued elsewhere, scholars “have shown this motif to be applied throughout early and late Graeco-Roman literature” (A. Botica, 2007: 308; Pettazzoni, 1956: 145-177; G. Nickelsburg, 1991: 132; W. Lane, 1991: 103; J. Fitzmeyer, 1991: 311-12, 519; J. Fergusson, 1970: 195). As early as Hesiod, the Greeks believed that there “is a virgin Justice, the daughter of Zeus... and whenever anyone hurts her with lying slander she sits beside her father Zeus, the son of Kronos, and tells him of men’s wicked heart” (*OP* 256-264/*Theogonia* 902). Aristophanes described Palas Athene as a deity who can take body form and watch (*episkopeo*) over human beings (*Eq.* 1173). Seneca too pointed out that “nothing is shut off from the sight of God. He is witness of our souls and he comes in the midst of our thoughts” (*Ep.* 83.1-2).

But there exist differences between the biblical and the Greco-Roman sources as well. Unlike the Old Testament, the Greek and Roman authors referred to a plurality of gods as divine beings who are watching over the world and who can penetrate even the secrets of the human heart (A. Botica, 2007: 308).<sup>13</sup> Among the lists of “all-knowing” deities one finds Zeus, as Argos Panoptes (“multiple eyes”), and also “the personification of Boreas,

12 A similar concept to Otto's points to Psalm 78:72 as well. Note similarly the phrase “the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart” in Ps 19:15, and we referred to Kaiser “for the dualism between deeds and intentions, which can be shown to operate in the prophets (condemnation of “outward acts of piety”), in the cultic life, as well as in individual cases like that of David (Ps 51:17; 1Sam 16:7).”

13 In this sense note Botica's references (2007) to Arrian, *Disc.* 1.14; Seneca, *Ep.* 83.1-2; 87.21; *De Prov.* 5.10; 16.4.7; Epictetus, *Disc.* 2.8.15, 24; 2.14.11; Herodotus 1.124; Philostratus, *Apoll. Tyan. I. P.* 4.; Hesiod, *Erga* 238, 251ff.; 267; *Theog.* 546, 550, 561; Homer, *Odys.* 4.379; 11.109; 12.323; 13.214; 14.487; 20.7; *Iliad* 19.258; M. Aurelius, *Med.* 12.2; Phil, *Aer. Frag.* 91; Plautus 2.2.310 (Latin); S. Emp., *Mat.* 9.54; Sophocles, *Oed. Tyr.* 498; *Antig.* 184; Xenophanes, *Frg.* 24; Aristophanes, *Eq.* 1173; Plato, *Laws* 901D; 905A; 717D; Xenophon, *Anab.* 2.5-7; Plutarch, *Mor.* 166D.

Aer, Aither, Helios, Apollo, and Selene, and Jupiter, Semo Sancus, and Janus in the Roman pantheon” (Pettazzoni, 1956: 145-77).

However, a more direct intermediary between the Old Testament and the New Testament motif of divine “all-knowledge” is *Second Temple Jewish literature*. The impact that the Old Testament exerted on all subsequent Jewish literature was felt in the way Palestinian and Hellenistic Jews employed the motif of the “All-Knowing” God. For example, Josephus described God as the “inspector and governor of our actions” (Ag. Ap. 294). He “is present to all the actions of their lives”, and sees not only the actions that are done, “but clearly knows those their thoughts also, whence those actions do arise” (Ant 6.263). Josephus also refers to God being “conscious of every secret action of the human heart” (Ant 9:3) and, as a heavenly Judge, He “sees all things and is present everywhere” (War 1.630). Similar sentiments were echoed in the intertestamental literature of 1-3 Maccabees, where God appears as “all-seeing” God and Lord (*pantepoteis*, 2Mac 7:35; 9:5, and *epopteis Teos*, 3Mac 2:21). He is able to “sees all things” (*ta panta eforontos*, in 2Mac 12:22; 2Mac 15:2). As we have pointed out, the theme of the “divine examination” of human deeds and thoughts is found in a wide variety of Second Temple literary works (A. Botica, 2007: 308).<sup>14</sup>

We will conclude our study with a review of Philo of Alexandria (approx. 20 B.C.E.—50 A.D.), perhaps the author who, outside of the Old and New Testament, exerted the most profound influence upon the theology of divine “all-knowledge”. Philo was a Jewish thinker trained in the classics, and who also enjoyed the respect of his Greek philosophical peers (for the influence of Greek thought on Philo, and especially on the importance of inward spirituality, see Botica, 2007: 297, and E. Brehier, 1908: 250ff., 295ff.; T. Billings, 1919, 1979: 72-87; W. Goodenough, 120ff., with the focus on “inner virtue” and “its relation to the external practice”; H. Wolfson, 1947: 1.266-67, with the “duties of the heart” and “the intellectual aspect of virtue”; J. Danielou, 1958: 191ff., for the role of “virtues in Philo and for the general turn inward”; Y. Amir, 1983: 18, for “the *spiritual/noetic* world as the *real* world”; P. Gagnon, 1993: 684-85, on “the imprints received on the soul or mind when one thinks virtuous or evil thoughts [*Leg.* 1.18 [61-62]); W. Merritt, 1993: 96ff., on “interiorization as a wider phenomenon”; M. Alexandre, 1995: 17-46). Alexandria at that time had become the cultural capital of the Western Empire. Hosting a rather large

14 See Botica (2007) for *Wis* 1:6-9; 3:1, 5-6; 3:13; 6:3; 7:17, 23-24; *Sir* 16:21; 23:19-20; 42:18; *Aristeas* 133; *T. Jud* 20:5; *1 Enoch* 9:5, 11; 84:3; *2 Enoch* 45:3; 52:13-15; 53:2-3; 66; *3 Enoch* 11:1-3; 45:3ff.; *Sus* 42; *2 Esd* 16:55; 16:6; *4 Ez* 16:54ff., 61; *2 Bar* 48:39; 83:1; *T. Jud* 20:1ff.; *T. Zeb* 5:2; *T. Naph* 2:6ff.; *T. Gad* 5:3ff.; *T. Jos* 2:6; *T. Ben* 6:7ff.; *T. Isaac* 4:21; *Ps. Phoc.* 51-52; *Psa. Sol.* 14:8; 17:25; *Hel. Syn. Pr.* 2:3-4, 7; 9:4-6; *Odes Sol.* 16:8-9; Menander (*Frag. Ps-Greek Poets* [Clem., *Strom.* 5.14.119, 2; 5.14.121, 1-3]).

Jewish population, Alexandria was often shaken by conflicts between the Greeks, who despised most foreigners, and the Jews, many of whom had chosen to segregate in their own ghettos. In order to appeal to the philosophical sensitivities of the Alexandrinians, Philo asserted that Moses was the greatest philosopher who had ever lived. Even more so, he interpreted the Law of Moses using the *method of allegory*: emphasizing the spiritual/philosophical dimension, and minimizing the physical/literary nature of a story or biography. In doing so, Philo hoped that he would make the Greek audience more sensitive toward Jewish faith, and persuade Jews not to abandon their ancestral traditions.

What concerns us here is not so much the allegorical method itself, as is one of the beliefs that Philo emphasized again and again. Namely, that God discerns not only the *deeds* of men and women, but also their *intentions, motives* and *hidden thoughts*.<sup>15</sup> The table below lists two dimensions of interpretation. In the left column Philo describes how people experience and evaluate reality. In the second column, Philo describes how God sees, searches and evaluate the hidden reality of the soul. For the full version of the table, that includes the Greek text as well, see Botica, 2007: 301-302.

<b>The “human” criterion for moral evaluation</b>	<b>The “divine” criterion for moral evaluation</b>	<b>Ref.</b>
“words spoken openly and deeds done openly are known to all.”	“No merely created being is capable of discerning the <i>hidden thought and motive</i> Only <i>God can do so...</i> , the <i>motives</i> being judged by the all-penetrating eye of God... who alone can see the soul naked...”	<i>Cher.</i> 16-17
Thinking that “the eye of God sees nothing but the outer world through the cooperation of the sun.”	“they do not know that <i>He surveys the unseen even before the seen</i> , for He himself is His own light... our <i>souls are a region open to His invisible entrance.</i> ”	<i>Cher.</i> 96-98
Men enter the temples only after bathing and	But they “shall never escape <i>the eye of Him who sees into the recesses of the mind</i>	<i>Deus.</i> 9

15 For this concept in Philo see Botica, 2007: 287, and references to D. Winston, 1979: 104; A. Dihle, 1985: 90-98. We pointed to the same motif in Philo and the connection with Hellenistic Judaism and the New Testament, in J. Moffat, 1924: 53-56; W. Attridge, 1989: 134-36; P. Ellingworth, 1993: 260-65; C. Koester, 2001: 274-75; D. Aune, 1997: 206.

cleaning.	<i>and treads its inmost shrine.”</i>	
	“For already God has pierced into the recesses of our soul and what is invisible to others is clear as daylight to His eyes.”	<i>Deus.</i> 29
“The words [of Balaam] that were spoken were noble words.”	<i>But</i> God, “who looks upon what is stored up in the soul, <i>saw</i> , with the Eye that alone has power to discern them, the things that are out of sight of created beings, and on the ground of these passed the sentence of condemnation.”	<i>Mig.</i> 114
The physical appearance of Joshua	“God, who surveys the invisible soul and to whom alone it is given to discern <i>the secrets of the mind</i> , to choose on his merits the man most fitted to command...”	<i>Virt.</i> 57
	“...handing them over to the <i>divine tribunal</i> only... First, because <i>arrogance is a vice of the soul and the soul is invisible save only to God.</i> ”	<i>Virt.</i> 172-74
What appears as the “noble birth” of Cain	Cain “who <i>displayed in his soul an ignobleness</i> , which God, the Overseer of human affairs, <i>saw and abhorred.</i> ”	<i>Virt.</i> 200
Men “admire virtue so far as outward appearance goes”	“God the surveyor, since He alone can scan the soul.”	<i>Abr.</i> 104
	“...the Eternal, ‘who surveys all things and hears all things’ even when no word is spoken, He who ever sees into the recesses of the mind, Whom I call witness to my conscience, which affirms that that was no false reconciliation.”	<i>Ios.</i> 265 cf. <i>Mos.</i> 2.217 <i>Decal.</i> 95
“Men can arbitrate on open matters” (in Num 5:12-31)	“but God on the hidden also, since <i>He alone can see clearly the soul.</i> ”	<i>Spec.</i> 3.52
“We inquire into what is manifest”	“but He penetrates noiselessly into the recesses of the soul, sees <i>our thoughts</i> ,... inspects our <i>motives</i> in their naked reality and at once distinguishes the counterfeit from the genuine.”	<i>Prov.</i> 36 (cf. 54)

“Men look at the quantity of gifts”	“but God looks at the truth of the soul turning aside from arrogance and flattery.”	QG 1.61
“what is visible”	“It is an atheistic belief not to hold that the divine eye penetrates all things and sees all things at one time, not only what is visible but also what is in <i>recesses, depths and abysses</i> .”	QG 1.69
“they judge by visible things”	“He judges by the <i>invisible thoughts of the soul</i> .”	QG 2.11 (cf. 2.60)
foolish man’s view of virtue	“divine Logos... enters <i>his soul</i> and examines and searches him.”	QG 4.62

Several conclusions are now in order regarding the contribution of Philo to this debate. First, judging by the number of citations, it is evident that Philo was influenced by the Old Testament. In this sense, he merely inherited the view that God penetrates and judges the thoughts of the heart. Second, judging purely by the terminology that he employed and the style that he adopted, one must conclude that Philo was thoroughly immersed in Greek philosophy. He cited freely from Homer, Plato and Stoic thinkers. His level of expressivity in Greek has been regarded by classic scholars as one of the most profound and technical of his age.

Arguably Philo was the Hellenistic Jewish author who offered the most profound view of God as the all-knowing deity who searches the heart. Philo likewise was a Jew who commented on the Greek Old Testament. He did not pioneer the allegorical method, nor did he invent most of the religious Greek terminology that would later be used by the early Christian thinkers. Yet, through his writings, Philo demonstrated that Jewish thinking of the Old Testament was now fertilizing the Hellenistic soil in which the early Christian church was born. Philo also became one of the most important sources for the Patristic thought the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### Conclusions

We hope to have shown that, when John wrote the book of Revelation, there had already been circulating in Asia Minor a rich tradition of spiritualizing the physical cult of the Old Testament. First, if our analysis of the Old Testament is correct, we will have established at least one major source for the Johannine concept of God as One who penetrates the deepest recesses of the soul. This means that apocalyptic thinking in the late first century AD was nourished by the texts of the Old Testament. Second, we have also established that Greek thinking envisioned God as an Overseer who

sees and judges the thoughts of the heart. The writings of Philo evidently attest to the phenomenon of Jewish Hellenism and the influence of the West upon Oriental religious thought. Indeed, no one will contest that the writings of the New Testament embody the final confluence of the Greek and Jewish visions of God and the world. The scenario of Revelation 2-3 presents God as the all-knowing deity who can penetrate into the deepest mysteries of the human heart. The objects of searching are, for the most part, the seven churches of Asia Minor (chapters 2-3), even though the text of 2:20, 23 may address specifically the situation of one individual: Jezebel, a false prophetess and teacher in the church at Thyatira. Based on our analysis, we conclude that the Johannine image of God as *searching* and *testing* the thoughts of the heart is deeply rooted in the worldview of the Old Testament and mediated through Hellenistic thinking and terminology.

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