

## THE BACKGROUND OF PSALM 139

E. J. YOUNG, Ph.D.

Psalm 139 is one of the grandest of all the Psalms, for it brings us face to face with the majesty and power of God. Immediately it exalts God as all knowing and omnipresent, and clearly shows that all of man's life is in God's hands.

The Psalm is a prayer and brings us right away to a contemplation of God's omniscience, particularly as this has to do with the Psalmist himself. This consideration of God's omniscience leads naturally to the contemplation of God's omnipresence. And at this point one of the principal exegetical questions involved in the study of this Psalm emerges. David asks "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (verse 7) What is the reason for asking such a question? Is the Psalmist merely suggesting that it is impossible to flee from God? On this interpretation David is asserting the greatness of God and in a somewhat theoretical manner, declaring that there is no escape from Him. More likely, however, David speaks as a sinner, for later in the Psalm he appeals to God to search him and to see if there be any wicked way in him. As a sinner, David fears before God and seeks to escape His presence.

To escape from God, however, for whatever reason, is impossible, for not only is He omniscient, He is also omnipresent. From these thoughts David turns to reflect upon God's relationship to himself. From the very first, when he was but an embryo in the womb of his mother, God had been with David. Those therefore, who oppose so great a God are also David's enemies and he must hate them with a perfect hatred. He closes with an appeal to God to search him and to lead him in the way everlasting.

Whence come such sublime thoughts? What is their origin? For those who will not acknowledge that the Bible is a revelation from God such questions become truly embarrassing. It is our purpose in this paper to consider a fairly recent attempt to account for the origin of this Psalm. For some time attention has been called to supposed similarities between Psalm 139 and certain of the Vedic hymns. Hints to this effect were early given by Max Müller and later direct attention was drawn to a supposed relationship. Perhaps the most exhaustive study of the subject has been made by Hildebrecht Hommel, son of the well known Dr. Fritz Hommel, in an article in the *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 60, 1929, pp. 110-124, entitled "Das religionsgeschichtliche Problem des 139 Psalms."

Before proceeding to a statement and examination of Hommel's thesis it will be necessary to utter a few remarks concerning the Vedic literature.

The vedas were the sacred books of ancient India. The word veda means knowledge (Greek *ιδμεν* we know; Latin, *videre*, Gothic *witum*, we know; English *wit*). and refers to sacred knowledge. The Vedic literature is that which was composed to meet religious needs, and hence is practical in nature. As a result of the uncertainty of Indian chronology, it is difficult to give exact dates for this Vedic literature. The Rig Veda, oldest of these works, has been dated variously from 4000-1000 B.C., perhaps 2000 B.C. being acceptable, and the close of the Vedic period is shortly before the beginning of the Christian era.

The vedic literature, following the hieratic and popular side of religion, is itself divided into two groups. On the one hand is the Rig Veda and other hieratic literature whereas on the other hand is the Atharva Veda and the house ceremonies. The Atharva Veda is the fourth of the Indian vedas, and is written in more modern language than the other three. To it there are appended 52 theological treatises called Upanishads.

In Atharva Veda IV, 16 are found statements which at least superficially resemble expressions in Psalm 139.

I. vs. 1. "The great Lord of this world sees as though he were near. When anyone thinks that he is acting stealthily, the gods know it all.

vs. 2. Whether one goes or stands, or hides himself, whether one goes to lie down or to rise, what two people sitting together plan, king Varuna knows it, he is like a third in their midst (cf. Ps. 139:1-4).

Ia. vs. 3. Even this earth is Varuna's, the king's, and this broad heaven together with its distant ends. Both seas are the hips of Varuna, and he is also contained in this little drop of water. (cf. Ps. 139:3).

II. vs. 4. If one should fly far away, beyond the heaven even then he would not escape Varuna, our king. His spies go out from heaven down to earth, with a thousand eyes they search out over the world.

vs. 5. King Varuna sees all this that is between heaven and earth and what lies beyond. He has counted the glances of men's eyes. As a player casts the dice, so he arranges all things.

III. vs. 6. May all thine evil snares that are there, sevenfold and threefold casting out catch the man who speaks a lie, may they spare him that speaks the truth.

According to Hommel, part I (vv. 1, 2) speak of God's omniscience, part Ia, which has no parallel in Psalm 139, praises Varuna's omnipotence in pantheistic language. Part II speaks of God's omnipresence in language similar to that of the Psalm. Part III speaks of flight from God, the enemy of God being designated in typical Iranian fashion as a liar. According to Hommel the three parts of the hymn have their counterparts in the Psalm and the first two also have counterparts in Plutarch, Xenophon and the Koran. It can hardly be chance, thinks Hommel, that two peoples so completely different in their religious thoughts and feelings should produce a hymn on God's omnipresence and that the two hymns should correspond in

structure and should conclude with a curse upon God's enemies. Of course, the Atharva-veda consists very largely of curses and blessings, and hence, it is not too surprising that one should be found at the conclusion of this hymn of praise.

Hermann Brunnhofer (*Iran und Turan*, 1889), calls attention to the formulas, "thoughts, ways words," and by means of many examples, argues that they are typically Indogermanic and not Semitic. In the Avesta and in Buddhism the three expressions often occur in the stereotyped formula, "thoughts, words, ways." Thus it also appears in Greek literature (Aeschylus, *Prometheus*, 528ff., Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 510), and in the language of the church.

"Nun danket alle Gott mit Herzen, Mund und Handen."

"—ich armer, sündiger Mensch bekenne vor Dir, dass ich leider wider alle Deine Gebote mit Gedanken, Worten, und Werken gesündigt habe, . . ." (Evangelical Lutheran Agenda). Hence, Brunnhofer concludes that both Psalm 139 and the Vedas derive from a common Indogermanic source, and he assumes that there was some contact between the original Aryans and Hebrews which must have occurred in the Median territory. Hommel believes that Brunnhofer's thesis is basically correct and that today because of discoveries in Boghaz-koi, it is possible to make some assumptions as to how this contact might have occurred.

According to Hommel, the Old Testament for the most part, does not envision God as omnipresent, but rather localizes Him in particular places. Only a few passages, particularly in Jeremiah, agree with the picture given in Psalm 139. This position, thinks Hommel, is strengthened by the thesis of Friedrich Notscher that the phrases, "to see God's face" and "to visit the shrine" are essentially synonymous, and can really be used interchangeably. The Masoretes and the Greek translators, according to Notscher, objected to this material way of presenting things and often emended the text. Indeed, a function of Israelitish sacrifice, we are told, is to represent God or make Him present for certain purposes.

Furthermore, Hommel appeals to the monograph of Hans Duhm, "Verkehr Gottes mit den Menschen im AT" (1926) who holds that according to the Old Testament man can have converse only with the god whose sanctuary he knows and can approach.

All these studies, thinks Hommel, support his thesis that "Voices which proclaim the omnipresence of God, sound quite isolated in the Old Testament" (Stimmen die von der Allgegenwart Gottes künden, im AT nur ganz vereinzelt ertönen."). How then, he asks, are these individual utterances as to God's omnipresence to be explained? Those in Jeremiah, thinks Hommel, may be due to psychological reasons, but may not some be accounted for historically? Certainly Psalm 139 must be explained in such a way, and if this is done, then the very late date for the Psalm must be abandoned. Thus, Amos (9:2, 3) seems to show acquaintance with this Psalm," though they

dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them: though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search out and take them and though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them." And Jeremiah (33:24), "Can a man hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the LORD."

While declaring his position that belief in omnipresence was a common property of Indian religion Hommel does acknowledge a difficulty in that in other indogermanic religions, such as the Greek, an official recognition of such a deep conception of omnipresence was not present. Indeed Hommel even quotes Günther Ipsen to the effect that the conception of God's omnipresence contradicted in general the old indogermanic conception. Would this fact not then show that Psalm 139 was not dependent upon indo-germanic conceptions? Hommel proceeds to answer as follows: What other possibilities of influence were there on the land of the Vedas in the 2nd century B.C.? There are the Amarna texts, 14th century B.C., which contain a poetic text in which the Canaanite Tagi speaks to the Pharaoh, the sun-god, "Whether we ascend to heaven, or whether we descend to hell (arallu) our head is in thine hands."

If one translate the Babylonian text back into Hebrew the similarity with Psalm 139:8 is quite striking. At the same time the Amarna text has a solar background, which is lacking both in the Vedic hymns and in the Biblical Psalm. In these two documents there is no trace of astral derivation. As Johannes Hempel pointed out, the language of Amarna really belongs to a type of Shamash hymn, which is widespread among ancient peoples. At the same time, thinks Hommel, this widespread view is but an early stage of the conception of omnipresence represented in the Psalm and the Vedas. When, then, did this conception first emerge; was the dependence upon the side of the Psalm or of the Vedas? upon Semitic or Indo-germanic ground? Were it on Semitic ground, objection would arise to the late date which this would necessitate for the Vedas. There would then also be an unbridgeable gap between the incomparable doctrine of Psalm 139 and the primitive solar conceptions of omnipresence from the middle of the second millennium before Christ.

Chronologically, the Vedic hymns would fit into this gap. Furthermore if one would attribute the Veda to a period earlier than the Psalm it would not be necessary to attribute to the prophets the transformation of the ancient solar conception into something more spiritual. We can, however, appeal to the Hittites. In the biography of Hattusilis, for example, there runs throughout the thought of the divine power governing the life course of man. And Hattusilis appeals to Ishtar's power supports the same thesis. Here, thinks Hommel, is the intermediary (Zwischenstufe) between the coarse astral "omnipresence" of the 2nd millennium and the advanced views of Veda and Psalm.

It will be well then to engage in a study of Hattusilis document to dis-

cover if possible, what doctrine of omnipresence it contains and what relation this doctrine may sustain to that of Psalm 139. Hattusilis the Third ruled in Hattusas from about 1298 to 1260 B.C., the youngest son of Mursilis the Second. To obtain the throne Hattusilis declared war upon his titular sovereign, deposing and banishing him. The action was of questionable legality, and Hattusilis must defend what he did before the council of the nobility, the *pankus*. Quite possibly the document commonly known as the Apology was addressed to this body.

The document is filled with interesting points which may be considered as illuminating the Biblical background. Hattusilis begins, for example, with the well known formula, Thus speaks King Hattusilis. (um-ma ma-ba-ar-na Ma-at-tu-si-li). He begins: "I tell Ishtar's divine power; let mankind hear it." (sa dIstar para handandatar memahi naat DUMU. NAM. Lu gal lu-as is-tamasdu).

From now on, among his descendants Hattusilis demands that reverence (na-ah-ha-a-an) is to exist. By means of a dream Ishtar had told Mursilis that she wanted Hattusilis to be her priest, in order that he might live. Otherwise his days were short, he is not to live (cf. Isa. 38). Hence, as her priest Hattusilis served Ishtar and prospered, "And My Lady Ishtar took me by the hand, and she guided me." (na-as-mu-kan pa-ra-a ha-an-ta-an-te es-ta).

Ishtar's favor toward Hattusilis however, resulted in people envying him (nu-mu ar-sa-ni-i-e-ir). The envy resulted in serious opposition so Ishtar again appeared in a dream, saying, "Shall I abandon you to a hostile deity? Fear not" (am-mu-uk tar-na-ah-hi nu-wa li-e na-ah-ti). From that point on, claims Hattusilis, Ishtar held him by the hand. She always rescued him. Even in ill health he observed the goddess divine power. The reason is stated in the king's words, "Because I, for my part, was an obedient man, and because I walked before the gods (a-na pa-ni DINGIR.MES) in obedience, I never pursued the evil course of mankind. Thou goddess, My Lady, dost always rescue me. Has it not been so? (u-ul e-es-ta). In time of danger Ishtar never abandoned him, neither to an enemy nor to his opponents in court. She always protected him and rescued him, placing the envious opponents in his hand so that he utterly destroyed them. In victory after victory, Ishtar was with him. In battle she marched before him. In gratitude Hattusilis enclosed a weapon in a case and set it up before the goddess.

Again, Hattusilis speaks of conquering further enemies, for Ishtar held him by the hand and stood with him. In opposition to witch craft which had been used against him, Ishtar commanded him to marry and gave him a happy home and family, and in this house the goddess dwelt. Furthermore she again caused witchcraft against Hattusilis to fail, causing an opponent to lose a legal case against him.

Once Ishtar appeared to the wife of Hattusilis in a dream, promising to exalt him and to make him king and priest of the sun goddess of Arinnas, if the wife would make Ishtar her patron deity. Ishtar showed abundantly

her divine power, shutting up an enemy of Hattusilis like a pig in a sty. To the king himself she gave desire after desire (i-la-ni i-la-mi nam-ma ti-is-ki-it).

When finally Hattusilis became the great king (LUGAL. GAL) he attributed the fact to his lady Ishtar. Ishtar, he says, is my goddess (DINGIR. LIM as-mu) In the future anyone who takes a descendant of Hattusilis away from the service of Ishtar is to be an opponent at law of Ishtar of Samuhas. And the descendants of Hattusilis are to be reverent (na-ah-ha-an-za) towards Ishtar of Samuhas among the gods.

Such is a brief summary of what the Hittite king Hattusilis has to say about Ishtar of Samuhas. How does this compare with the thoughts of Psalm 139? It may be acknowledged at the outset that in a certain sense Hattusilis' document is a prayer. Thus, he does address Ishtar, "Insignificant as I was when thou, My Lady Ishtar, didst take me, thou didst set me in the high place in the land of Hatti, upon the throne (LUGAL-is-na-an ni ti-it-ta-nu-nu-un -nu-mu DISHTAR GASAN-ya ma-si-wa-an da-at-ta nu-mu sal-la-i pi-di A-NA KUR uruHAT-TI LUGAL-iz-na-an-ni). This, however, appears to be the only passage in the document in which there is a real address to the goddess. Contrast this isolated utterance with the frequent address of the Psalm; in twenty of the twenty four verses of the Psalm God is directly addressed, and the remaining four verses are in reality but continuations of an express address made to God in a previous verse. Actually, the entire Psalm is an outpouring of David's heart to Jehovah. There is nothing comparable to this in Hattusilis apology. Rather, throughout, the king speaks of Ishtar in the third person. If one were to speak of literary genre, then these two documents are to be regarded as completely diverse. According to Artur Weiser this Psalm may be classified as a hymnic prayer in which the poet "speaks of God by addressing him on the basis of a personal I-Thou relationship and not by making objective statements about God to others" (*Psalms*, p. 302). If we were to adopt this classification of the Psalm, we should be compelled to acknowledge that this was a Gattung which did not apply to Hattusilis document, for, throughout the document Hattusilis does make objective statements about Ishtar. But the designation *mizmor* could not possibly apply to the Apology. Judged purely from the literary standpoint the two documents are of an entirely different nature.

A far more important consideration is the fact that Hattusilis, despite the encomia which he heaps upon Ishtar, was a polytheist. This appears at the outset, when the king demands that among his gods there be reverence for Ishtar. (DUTUSI DINGIR. MES-as-kan is-tar-na A-NA dISTAR na-ah-ha-an e-es-du). What happens to other gods is not the king's concern; he desires that of all these gods Ishtar be singled out for reverence.

Furthermore, the sister of Hattusilis bore the name salDINGIR. MES IR-is, i.e., the gods. When the father of Hattusilis died, the Hittites regarded him as having become a deity. Thus, the king says, "But when my father died," (lit., when my father became a god"). When enemies threatened,

Ishtar comforted the king with the words, "Shall I abandon you to a (hostile) deity? DINGIR. LIM-ni-wa-at-ta). Then follows the statement, "And I was cleared from the (hostile) deity. In fact, one reason why Ishtar protected Hattusilis is that he walked before the gods in obedience. (A-NA PA-NI DINGIR. MES).

A very interesting statement is the following; "When however, my brother Muwattalis at the command of his (patron) deity went down to the Lower Country and left Hattusas, my brother took the gods of Hatti and the Manes (GIDIM. HI. IA) and carried them down into the Lower country." This is an instructive passage for it exhibits the same low type of polytheism, so widespread over the entire ancient Near East, and reflected in the words of the servants of the king of Syria, "Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore, they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they" (1 Kings 20:23). In line with this conception is the statement, "Then he gathered in one spot the gods of Hatti and the Manes, and carried them down to Dattassas," although the reference here might simply mean that idol statues were carried.

One of the king's enemies, Urhitesupas, tried to destroy him and this is said to have been done at the command of a god (ISTU A-WA-AT DINGIR. LIM) and at the suggestion of men (U ISTU INIM LU). In appealing to Urhitesupas, Hattusilis cries, "Come! Ishtar of Samuhas and the storm god of Nerikkas shall decide the case for us" and in this correspondence the king asks, "Would they (the gods?) have subjected a great king (who was) upright to a small king?" The plural is used, and it would seem that the reference is to gods. (kat-te-ir-ra-ah-hi-ir; cf. the form with the Latin perfect *videre*).

Even Ishtar herself declares to the wife of Hattusilis that she will make him priest of the sun goddess of Arinnas (dUTU urnTUL-NA). Finally, as at the beginning of the Apology, so at its close, Hattusilis demands that there be reverence for Ishtar among the gods.

In the third place it may be noted that Ishtar herself is localized. She is the goddess of Samuhas. The situation seems to be quite similar to that which prevails in Roman Catholic devotion. There is a Notre Dame de Paris, and a Nuestra Senora de los Angeles. Each city has its virgin, the object of devotion. Sometimes this leads to rivalry as exemplified in a Spanish couplet:

Mare mia de la Esperanza,  
No llores no tengas pena,  
Que tu cara es mas bonita  
De la de la Macarena.

The similarity appears also in the frequent address of Ishtar as "My Lady." (GASAN-IA). How then may these things be explained?

What was in the mind of Hattusilis as he uttered these thoughts we have no means of knowing. What conception of Ishtar Hattusilis entertained must forever be unknown to us. We can only make judgments upon

the basis of what is found in the Apology. And when we do this it is perfectly clear that here is no conception of omnipresence such as that found in Psalm 139. Ishtar, at best, is but a limited deity, one of many deities, and she is in no sense conceived as omnipresent.

Nor is she really conceived as omnipotent. The king does speak of her "divine power." This is the translation of *para handandatar* (*παρα*), From the participle *para handanza* (ruled by a god) probably comes the denominative verb *para handanda*. Does this refer to a supernatural power which the god exerts on behalf of the worshipper who becomes temporarily endowed therewith? Or, does the noun simply mean "Endowed with miraculous power." That is, does it connote the ruling or controlling by divine emanation? The subject of the Apology is the rule by divine power of Ishtar, just as the subject of the Iliad is the wrath (*μηνιν*) of Achilles and that of the Aeneid the arms and man (*arma virumque cano*). The purpose of the apology is to show how the *para handandatar* of Ishtar of Samuhas was manifested in bringing Hattusilis to the throne and firmly establishing him thereupon. But Ishtar was not the only deity to whom *para handandatar* might be ascribed. It would seem then that this quality might be predicated of any of the deities which were worshipped in the Hittite realm. The Ishtar of Samuhas possessed *para handandatar*, but so also did other deities. When therefore we consider statements which on the surface appear to teach Ishtar's providence and power, we must regard them as merely examples of the *para handandatar* of Ishtar of Samuhas.

It is against this background that we must understand the dreams which Ishtar supposedly sent to the king. Likewise, expressions such as, "And my Lady Ishtar took me by the hand; and she guided me," must also be qualified. Indeed, it is safe to conclude that there is no statement either of a genuine omnipresence or omniscience in the Apology. Omnipresence is not predicated of Ishtar. In attributing his continued successes to Ishtar, Hattusilis may have been guided merely by political motives. "It may be, on the other hand, that Hattusilis' language was merely a certain court style; it had no real meaning, but was merely used in order to give to the Apology a certain convincing force. It is also possible that the king, living at a time of gross superstition, spoke under the influence of that superstition. His words, upon this assumption, would be but idle expressions, devoid of any true meaning. It is also possible that the words of the king were the expressions of ignorance and thoughtlessness. In other words they may have been uttered lightly, as merely empty phrases or clichés. It is not always easy to discover the reasons why people use religious language" (*My Servants The Prophets*, Grand Rapids, 1952, p. 169). Quite probably the language was little more than idle talk. At any rate, whatever its nature, it can hardly be said to present a doctrine of omnipresence, nor can it legitimately be regarded a bridge between India and the Semitic world in this respect.

What about the Vedic literature itself? Does it present a real parallel to Psalm 139 with respect to the doctrine of omnipresence? Here again, we

have to do with a polythesitic background, such as is utterly foreign to the Psalm. "When anyone thinks that he is acting stealthily, the gods know it all." That is not a statement either of omniscience or of omnipresence. Furthermore, it is difficult to escape a pantheistic emphasis. Both seas are the hips of Varunna, and he is also contained in this little drop of water." Hommel would compare this with Psalm 139:9 which mentions the *aherith hayom* but is there any comparison? Psalm 139 teaches omnipresence, the Veda teaches pantheism.

Furthermore, the Veda seems to localize king Varunna. His dwelling apparently is heaven but his spies go out from heaven down to earth, and search out the earth with a thousand eyes. In the first verse it is stated that the great lord of the world sees as though he were near. Actually, he is not near, but is localized in heaven. Against this background, then, we must understand the statements which seem to teach omnipresence.

The only real similarity with the language of the Psalm is found in the second verse, "Whether one goes or stands, or hides himself, whether one goes to lie down or to rise, what two people sitting together plan, king Varunna knows it, he is like a third in their midst." Here however, Varunna is really compared with a man. His method of obtaining knowledge is compared to that of a man who is present in the midst of other men, a conception which is utterly without parallel in Psalm 139.

Even verse 4 is different in its emphasis from the Psalm. "If one should fly far away, beyond the heaven even then he would not escape Varunna, our king." In what sense, however, is this intended? Does it mean that one cannot escape from the spies of Varunna, or does it mean that Varunna himself is actually present beyond the heaven? On this point the Psalm is perfectly explicit, "If I ascend up into heaven Thou are there, if I make Sheol my couch, behold Thee! If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there Thy hand leads me, and thy right hand holds me." With all plainness and confidence it may be said that there is nothing like this exalted doctrine in the Veda.

Let us consider briefly certain later passages which supposedly exhibit a doctrine of omnipresence. In the *Memorabilia* I, 1, 19 Xenophon has Socrates say that the gods know all things, deeds and unspoken thoughts and that they are everywhere and give signs over all human things." And in I:14, 18 Socrates says that the deity knows everything and hears everything and is everywhere and cares for all." Here, however, the polytheistic background must also be taken into account.

In the *Anabasis* II:7, 5, 2 Xenophon says, "In a battle with the gods, who can flee away fast enough, and where should he escape? In what darkness should he hide himself and to what certain place can he betake himself?"

Plutarch, writing about superstition, asserts, "He who fears the rule of the gods, where shall he go, where shall he flee, where will he find a land or sea in which God is not present? Into what corner of the world, oh!

thou unfortunate one, wouldst thou descend to hide thyself and to be certain that thou hadst escaped the deity?"

Finally, in Sura 58:8 Mohammed says, "dost thou not see that God knows what is in heaven and what upon earth? A secret conversation by three people cannot be carried on without his being the fourth, nor by five people, in which he is the sixth . . ." (Cf. Matthew 18:20).

These passages speak more or less for themselves. How far they really are removed from the thought of the Psalm will appear even from a cursory examination. Indeed, it will be necessary to consider only a few points raised by the Psalm. First of all there is the tenderness expressed by the introductory word, oh! Lord. David speaks as a member of the covenant, one who trusts in the God of his salvation. To this relationship between David and the Lord there is nothing comparable either in the Veda or in the Hittite document. David knew that he was addressing the true God and not a figment of his imagination. The subject of the Psalm, in fact, is the Lord. The relationship of the Lord to David is really a secondary matter. In a certain sense it is true that when we have uttered the expression *yahweh* we have covered the entire content of the Psalm.

Secondly, the Psalm presents a genuine doctrine of omnipresence. It is true that this is stated with respect to David, but even so, it is the fact of omnipresence which is stated. This appears as early as verse 5, and comes to strong expression in the *sham attah* of verse 8. Indeed the contemplation of this remarkable fact of omniscience and omnipresence leads the Psalmist to rejoice that this is his God. "Search me, Oh God, and know my heart"—that is his willing desire.

Whence, however, did the Psalmist derive so high a doctrine of God? One who accepts the Bible's witness to itself will readily acknowledge that David spoke as a recipient of divine revelation, one who in his writing was superintended by God's Spirit. And here lies the solution of the problem. God has revealed the truth about Himself in respect to His omniscience. Without this revelation men may create imitations of the truth, but they are only imitations, far from the truth. The truth is known to fallen man only by special revelation. Although the created universe abundantly testifies to God's omnipresence, yet, because of his darkened understanding, man does not read the created universe aright. He needs special revelation and Psalm 139 is special revelation.

Westminster Seminary  
Philadelphia, Pa.