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JOB 14: 1 "Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.

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The shortness, misery, and sinfulness of man's life, Job 14:1-4. The unavoidable necessity of death; and the hope of a general resurrection, Job 14:5-15. Job deplores his own state, and the general wretchedness of man, Job 14:16-22.

Verse 1

Man - born of a woman - There is a delicacy in the original, not often observed: אדם ילוד אשה Adam yelud ishah, "Adam born of a woman, few of days, and full of tremor." Adam, who did not spring from woman, but was immediately formed by God, had many days, for he lived nine hundred and thirty years; during which time neither sin nor death had multiplied in the earth, as they were found in the days of Job. But the Adam who springs now from woman, in the way of ordinary generation, has very few years. Seventy, on an average, being the highest term, may be well said to be few in days; and all matter of fact shows that they are full of fears and apprehensions, רגז rogez, cares, anxieties, and tremors. He seems born, not indeed to live, but to die; and, by living, he forfeits the title to life.

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JOB 14: 2 He grows up like a flower, and is cut down. He also flees like a shadow, and doesn't continue.

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Verse 2

He cometh forth like a flower - This is a frequent image both in the Old and New Testament writers; I need not quote the places here, as the readers will find them all in the margin.

He fleeth also as a shadow - Himself, as he appears among men, is only the shadow of his real, substantial, and eternal being. He is here compared to a vegetable; he springs up, bears his flower is often nipped by disease, blasted by afflictions and at last cut down by death. The bloom of youth, even in the most prosperous state, is only the forerunner of hoary hairs, enfeebled muscles, impaired senses, general debility, anility, and dissolution. All these images are finely embodied, and happily expressed, in the beautiful lines of a very nervous and correct poet, too little known, but whose compositions deserve the first place among what may be called the minor poets of Britain. See at the end of the chapter, Job 14:22 (note).

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JOB 14: 3 Do you open your eyes on such a one, and bring me into judgement with you?

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Verse 3

Dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one - The whole of this chapter is directed to God alone; in no part of it does he take any notice of his friends.

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JOB 14: 4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.

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Verse 4

Who can bring a clean thing - This verse is thus rendered by the Chaldee: "Who will produce a clean thing from man, who is polluted with sins, except God, who is one?" By Coverdale thus: Who can make it cleane, that commeth of an unclean thinge? No body. The text refers to man's original and corrupt nature. Every man that is born into the world comes into it in a corrupt or sinful state. This is called original sin; and is derived from fallen Adam, who is the stock, to the utmost ramifications of the human family. Not one human spirit is born into the world without this corruption of nature. All are impure and unholy; and from this principle of depravity all transgression is produced; and from this corruption of nature God alone can save. The Septuagint, in the Codex Alexandrinus, reads the verse thus: Τις γαρ εσται καθαρο· απο ρυπου; ουδε εις, εαν και μιας ημερας γενηται ο βιος αυτου επι της γης; "Who is pure from corruption? Not one, although he had lived but one day upon the earth."

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JOB 14: 5 Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his bounds that he can't pass;

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Verse 5

Seeing his days are determined - The general term of human life is fixed by God himself; in vain are all attempts to prolong it beyond this term. Several attempts have been made in all nations to find an elixir that would expel all the seeds of disease, and keep men in continual health; but all these attempts have failed. Basil, Valentine, Norton, Dastin, Ripley, Sandivogius, Artephius, Geber, Van Helmont, Paracelsus, Philalethes, and several others, both in Europe and Asia, have written copiously on the subject, and have endeavored to prove that a tincture might be produced, by which all imperfect metals may be transmuted into perfect; and an elixir by which the human body may be kept in a state of endless repair and health. And these profess to teach the method by which this tincture and this elixir may be made! Yet all these are dead; and dead, for aught we know, comparatively young! Artephius is, indeed, said to have lived ninety years, which is probable; but some of his foolish disciples, to give credit to their thriftless craft, added another cipher, and made his age nine hundred! Man may endeavor to pass the bound; and God may, here and there, produce a Thomas Parr, who died in 1635, aged one hundred and fifty-two; and a Henry Jenkins, who died in 1670, aged one hundred and sixty-nine; but these are rare instances, and do not affect the general term. Nor can death be avoided. Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return, is the law, and that will ever render nugatory all such pretended tinctures and elixirs. But, although man cannot pass his appointed bounds, yet he may so live as never to reach them; for folly and wickedness abridge the term of human life; and therefore the psalmist says, Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out Half their days, Psa 55:23, for by indolence, intemperance, and disorderly passions, the life of man is shortened in cases innumerable. We are not to understand the bounds as applying to individuals, but to the race in general. Perhaps there is no case in which God has determined absolutely that man's age shall be so long, and shall neither be more nor less. The contrary supposition involves innumerable absurdities.

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JOB 14: 6 Look away from him, that he may rest, until he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day.

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Verse 6

Turn from him, that he may rest - Cease to try him by afflictions and distresses, that he may enjoy some of the comforts of life, before he be removed from it: and thus, like a hireling, who is permitted by his master to take a little repose in the heat of the day, from severe labor, I shall also have a breathing time from affliction, before I come to that bound over which I cannot pass. See Job 10:20 (note), where there is a similar request.

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JOB 14: 7 "For there is hope for a tree, If it is cut down, that it will sprout again, that the tender branch of it will not cease.

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Verse 7

For there is hope of a tree - We must not, says Calmet, understand this of an old tree, the stem and roots of which are dried up and rotted: but there are some trees which grow from cuttings, and some which, though pulled out of the earth, and having had their roots dried and withered by long exposure to the sun and wind, will, on being replanted, take root and resume their verdure. There are also certain trees, the fibres of which are so solid, that if after several years they be steeped in water, they resume their vigor, the tubes dilate, and the blossoms or flowers which were attached to them expand; as I have often witnessed in what is called the rose of Jericho. There are few trees which will not send forth new shoots, when the stock is cut down level with the earth.

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JOB 14: 8 Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground,

JOB 14: 9 yet through the scent of water it will bud, and sprout boughs like a plant.

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Verse 9

Through the scent of water it will bud - A fine metaphor: the water acts upon the decaying and perishing tree, as strong and powerful odors from musk, otto of roses, ammonia, etc., act on a fainting or swooning person.

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JOB 14: 10 But man dies, and is laid low. Yes, man gives up the spirit, and where is he?

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Verse 10

But man dieth - No human being ever can spring from the dead body of man; that wasteth away, corrupts, and is dissolved; for the man dies; and when he breathes out his last breath, and his body is reduced to dust, then, where is he? There is a beautiful verse in the Persian poet Khosroo, that is not unlike this saying of Job: - "I went towards the burying ground, and wept

To think of the departure of friends which were captives to death;

I said, Where are they! and Fate

Gave back this answer by Echo, Where are they?

Thus paraphrased by a learned friend: -

Beneath the cypress' solemn shade,

As on surrounding tombs I gazed,

I wept, and thought of friends there laid,

Whose hearts with warmest love had blazed.

Where are those friends my heart doth lack,

Whose words, in grief, gave peace? Ah, where?

And Fate, by Echo, gave me back

This short but just reply, Ah, where?

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JOB 14: 11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the river wastes and dries up,

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Verse 11

The waters fail from the sea - I believe this refers to evaporation, and nothing else. As the waters are evaporated from the sea, and the river in passing over the sandy desert is partly exsiccated, and partly absorbed; and yet the waters of the sea are not exhausted, as these vapors, being condensed, fall down in rain, and by means of rivers return again into the sea: so man is imperceptibly removed from his fellows by death and dissolution; yet the human race is still continued, the population of the earth being kept up by perpetual generations.

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JOB 14: 12 so man lies down and doesn't rise. Until the heavens are no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep.

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Verse 12

So man lieth down - He falls asleep in his bed of earth.

And riseth not - Men shall not, like cut down trees and plants, reproduce their like; nor shall they arise till the heavens are no more, till the earth and all its works are burnt up, and the general resurrection of human beings shall take place. Surely it would be difficult to twist this passage to the denial of the resurrection of the body. Neither can these expressions be fairly understood as implying Job's belief in the materiality of the soul, and that the whole man sleeps from the day of his death to the morning of the resurrection. We have already seen that Job makes a distinction between the animal life and rational soul in man; and it is most certain that the doctrine of the materiality of the soul, and its sleep till the resurrection, has no place in the sacred records. There is

a most beautiful passage to the same purpose, and with the same imagery, in Moschus's epitaph on the death of Bion: - Αι, αι ται μαλαχαι μεν επαν κατα καπον ολωνται, Η τα χλωρα σελινα, το τ' ευθαλες ουλον ανηθον, Ύστερον αυ ζωντι, και εις ετος αλλο φυοντι· Αμμες δ', οί μεγαλοι, και καρτεροι, η σοφοι ανδρες, Όποτε πρωτα θανωμες, ανακοοι εν χθονι κοιλα Εύδομες ευ μαλα μακρον, ατερμονα, νηγρετον ύπνον.

Idyll. iii., ver. 100.

Alas! alas! the mallows, when they die,  
Or garden herbs, and sweet Anethum's pride,  
Blooming in vigor, wake again to life,  
And flourish beauteous through another year:  
But we, the great, the mighty, and the wise,  
When once we die, unknown in earth's dark womb  
Sleep long and drear, the endless sleep of death.

J. B. B. C.

A more cold and comfortless philosophy was never invented. The next verse shows that Job did not entertain this view of the subject.

JOB 14: 13 "Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath is past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!"

Verse 13

O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave - Dreadful as death is to others, I shall esteem it a high privilege; it will be to me a covert from the wind and from the tempest of this affliction and distress.

Keep me secret - Hide my soul with thyself, where my enemies cannot invade my repose; or, as the poet expresses it: - "My spirit hide with saints above,

My body in the tomb."

Job does not appear to have the same thing in view when he entreats God to hide him in the grave; and to keep him secret, until his wrath be past. The former relates to the body; the latter to the spirit.

That thou wouldest appoint me a set time - As he had spoken of the death of his body before, and the secreting of his spirit in the invisible world, he must refer here to the resurrection; for what else can be said to be an object of desire to one whose body is mingled with the dust?

And remember me! - When my body has paid that debt of death which it owes to thy Divine justice, and the morning of the resurrection is come, when it may be said thy wrath,  $\gamma\pi\alpha$  appecha, "thy displeasure," against the body is past, it having suffered the sentence denounced by thyself: Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die; then remember me - raise my body, unite my spirit to it, and receive both into thy glory for ever.

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JOB 14: 14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, until my release should come.

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Verse 14

If a man die, shall he live again? - The Chaldee translates, If a wicked man die, can he ever live again? or, he can never live again. The Syriac and Arabic thus: "If a man die, shall he revive? Yea, all the days of his youth he awaits till his old age come." The Septuagint: "If a man die, shall he live, having accomplished the days of his life? I will endure till I live again." Here is no doubt, but a strong persuasion, of the certainty of the general resurrection.

All the days of my appointed time - צבאי tsebai, "of my warfare;" see on Job 7:1 (note). Will I await till חליפתי chaliphathi, my renovation, come. This word is used to denote the springing again of grass, Psa 90:5, Psa 90:6, after it had once withered, which is in itself a very expressive emblem of the resurrection.

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JOB 14: 15 You would call, and I would answer you. You would have a desire to the work of your hands.

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Verse 15

Thou shalt call - Thou shalt say There shall be time no longer: Awake, ye dead! and come to judgment!

And I will answer thee - My dissolved frame shall be united at thy call; and body and soul shall be rejoined.

Thou wilt have a desire - תכסוף tichsoph, "Thou wilt pant with desire;" or, "Thou wilt yearn over the work of thy hands." God has subjected the creature to vanity, in hope; having determined the resurrection. Man is one of the noblest works of God. He has exhibited him as a master-piece of his creative skill, power, and goodness. Nothing less than the strongest call upon justice could have induced him thus to destroy the work of his hands. No wonder that he has an earnest desire towards it; and that although man dies, and is as water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered up again; yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him. Even God is represented as earnestly longing for the ultimate reviviscence of the sleeping dust. He cannot, he will not, forget the work of his hands.

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JOB 14: 16 But now you number my steps. Don't you watch over my sin?

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Verse 16

For now thou numberest my steps - *כִּי עֲתָה* *ki attah*, Although thou, etc. Though thou, by thy conduct towards me, seemest bent on my utter destruction, yet thou delightest in mercy, and I shall be saved.

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JOB 14: 17 My disobedience is sealed up in a bag. You fasten up my iniquity.

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#### Verse 17

My transgression is sealed up in a bag - An allusion to the custom of collecting evidence of state transgressions, sealing them up in a bag, and presenting them to the judges and officers of state to be examined, in order to trial and judgment. Just at this time (July, 1820) charges of state transgressions, sealed up in a Green Bag, and presented to the two houses of parliament, for the examination of a secret committee, are making a considerable noise in the land. Some suppose the allusion is to money sealed up in bags; which is common in the East. This includes two ideas:

1. Job's transgressions were all numbered; not one was passed by.
  2. They were sealed up; so that none of them could be lost. These bags were indifferently sewed or sealed, the two words in the text.
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JOB 14: 18 "But the mountain falling comes to nothing. The rock is removed out of its place;

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#### Verse 18

The mountain falling cometh to naught - Every thing in nature is exposed to mutability and decay: - even mountains themselves may fall from their bases, and be dashed to pieces; or be suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake; and, by the same means, the strongest and most massive rocks may be removed.

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JOB 14: 19 The waters wear the stones. The torrents of it wash away the dust of the earth. So you destroy the hope of man.

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#### Verse 19

The waters wear the stones - Even the common stones are affected in the same way. Were even earthquakes and violent concussions of nature wanting, the action of water, either running over them as a stream, or even falling upon them in drops, will wear these stones. Hence the proverb: -

*Gutta cavat lapidem non vi sed saepe cadendo.* "Constant droppings will make a hole in a flint." *Ἐκ θαμίνης ραθαμιγγος, ὀκως λογος, αιεσ ιοισας, Χ' ἄ λιθος ες ρωχμον κοιλαινεται.* "From frequent dropping, as the proverb says, perpetually falling, even a stone is hollowed into a hole."

Thou washest away the things - Alluding to sudden falls of rain occasioning floods, by which the fruits of the earth are swept away; and thus the hope of man - the grain for his household, and provender for his cattle, is destroyed.

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JOB 14: 20 You forever prevail against him, and he departs. You change his face, and send him away.

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#### Verse 20

Thou prevailest for ever against him - It is impossible for him to withstand thee: every stroke of thine brings him down.

Thou changest his countenance - Probably an allusion to the custom of covering the face, when the person was condemned, and sending him away to execution. See the case of Haman, in the note on Esther, Est 7:8 (note).

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JOB 14: 21 His sons come to honour, and he doesn't know it. They are brought low, but he doesn't perceive it of them.

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#### Verse 21

His sons come to honor - When dead, he is equally indifferent and unconscious whether his children have met with a splendid or oppressive lot in life; for as to this world, when man dies, in that day all his thoughts perish.

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JOB 14: 22 But his flesh on him has pain, and his soul within him mourns."

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#### Verse 22

But his flesh upon him shall have pain - The sum of the life of man is this, pain of body and distress of soul; and he is seldom without the one or the other, and often oppressed by both. Thus ends Job's discourse on the miserable state and condition of man. The last verse of the preceding chapter has been differently translated and explained. Mr.

Good's version is the following, which he vindicates in a learned note: -

For his flesh shall drop away from him;

And his soul shall become a waste from him.

The Chaldee thus: "Nevertheless his flesh, on account of the worms, shall grieve over him; and his soul, in the house of judgment, shall wail over him." In another copy of this version it is thus: "Nevertheless his flesh, before the window is closed over him, shall grieve; and his soul, for seven days of mourning, shall bewail him in the house of his burial." I shall give the Hebrew: - אך בשרו עליו יכאב



Ach besaro alaiv yichab, ונפשו עליו תאבל

Venaphsho alaiv teebal.

Which Mr. Stock translates thus, both to the spirit and letter: -

But over him his flesh shall grieve;

And over him his breath shall mourn. "In the daring spirit of oriental poetry," says he, "the flesh, or body, and the breath, are made conscious beings; the former lamenting its putrefaction in the grave, the latter mourning over the mouldering clay which it once enlivened."

This version is, in my opinion, the most natural yet offered. The Syriac and Arabic present nearly the same sense: "But his body shall grieve over him; and his soul be astonished over him."

Coverdale follows the Vulgate: Whyle he lyveth his flesh must have travayle; and whyle the soul is in him, he must be in sorowe.

On Job 14:2. I have referred to the following beautiful lines, which illustrate these finely figurative texts: -

He cometh forth as a Flower, and is Cut Down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

All flesh is Grass, and all the godliness thereof is as the Flower of the field.

The Grass withereth, the Flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The morning flowers display their sweets, And gay their silken leaves unfold;

As careless of the noonday heats, As fearless of the evening cold.

Nipp'd by the wind's untimely blast, Parch'd by the sun's directer ray,

The momentary glories waste, The short-lived beauties die away.

So blooms the human face divine, When youth its pride of beauty shows;

Fairer than spring the colors shine, And sweeter than the virgin rose.

Or worn by slowly-rolling years, Or broke by sickness in a day,

The fading glory disappears, The short-lived beauties die away.

Yet these, new rising from the tomb, With lustre brighter far shall shine;

Revive with ever-during bloom, Safe from diseases and decline.

Let sickness blast, let death devour, If heaven must recompense our pains:

Perish the grass and fade the flower, If firm the word of God remains.

See a Collection of Poems on Sundry Occasions, by the Rev. Samuel Wesley, Master of Blundell's School, Tiverton.