

## PSALM XC.

**TITLE.**—A Prayer of Moses the man of God. *Many attempts have been made to prove that Moses did not write this Psalm, but we remain unmoved in the conviction that he did so. The condition of Israel in the wilderness is so pre-eminently illustrative of each verse, and the turns, expressions, and words are so similar to many in the Pentateuch, that the difficulties suggested are, to our mind, light as air in comparison with the internal evidence in favour of its Mosaic origin. Moses was mighty in word as well as deed, and this Psalm we believe to be one of his weighty utterances, worthy to stand side by side with his glorious oration recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him. The Psalm is called a prayer, for the closing petitions enter into its essence, and the preceding verses are a meditation preparatory to the supplication. Men of God are sure to be men of prayer. This was not the only prayer of Moses, indeed it is but a specimen of the manner in which the seer of Horeb was wont to commune with heaven, and intercede for the good of Israel. This is the oldest of the Psalms, and stands between two books of Psalms as a composition unique in its grandeur, and alone in its sublime antiquity. Many generations of mourners have listened to this Psalm when standing around the open grave, and have been consoled thereby, even when they have not perceived its special application to Israel in the wilderness and have failed to remember the far higher ground upon which believers now stand.*

**SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.**—*Moses sings of the frailty of man, and the shortness of life, contrasting therewith the eternity of God, and founding thereon earnest appeals for compassion. The only division which will be useful separates the contemplation 1—11 from the prayer 12—17: there is indeed no need to make even this break, for the unity is well preserved throughout.*

### EXPOSITION.

**L**ORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*.

10 The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.

1. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." We must consider the whole Psalm as written for the tribes in the desert, and then we shall see

the primary meaning of each verse. Moses, in effect, says—wanderers though we be in the howling wilderness, yet we find a home in thee, even as our forefathers did when they came out of Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in tents among the Canaanites. To the saints the Lord Jehovah, the self-existent God, stands instead of mansion and roof-tree; he shelters, comforts, protects, preserves, and cherishes all his own. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the saints dwell in their God, and have always done so in all ages. Not in the tabernacle or the temple do we dwell, but in God himself; and this we have always done since there was a church in the world. We have not shifted our abode. King's palaces have vanished beneath the crumbling hand of time—they have been burned with fire and buried beneath mountains of ruins, but the imperial race of heaven has never lost its regal habitation. Go to the Palatine and see how the Cæsars are forgotten of the halls which echoed to their despotic mandates, and resounded with the plaudits of the nations over which they ruled, and then look upward and see in the ever-living Jehovah the divine home of the faithful, untouched by so much as the finger of decay. Where dwelt our fathers, a hundred generations since, there dwell we still. It is of New Testament saints that the Holy Ghost has said, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God and God in him!" It was a divine mouth which said, "Abide in me," and then added, "he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." It is most sweet to speak with the Lord as Moses did, saying, "Lord, thou art our dwelling place," and it is wise to draw from the Lord's eternal condescensions reasons for expecting present and future mercies, as the Psalmist did in the next Psalm wherein he describes the safety of those who dwell in God.

2. "*Before the mountains were brought forth.*" Before those elder giants had struggled forth from nature's womb, as her dread firstborn, the Lord was glorious and self-sufficient. Mountains to him, though hoar with the snows of ages, are but new-born babes, young things whose birth was but yesterday, mere novelties of an hour. "*Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world.*" Here too the allusion is to a birth. Earth was born but the other day, and her solid land was delivered from the flood but a short while ago. "*Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,*" or, "thou art, O God." God was, when nothing else was. He was God when the earth was not a world but a chaos, when mountains were not upheaved, and the generation of the heavens and the earth had not commenced. In this Eternal One there is a safe abode for the successive generations of men. If God himself were of yesterday, he would not be a suitable refuge for mortal men; if he could change and cease to be God he would be but an uncertain dwelling-place for his people. The eternal existence of God is here mentioned to set forth, by contrast, the brevity of human life.

3. "*Thou turnest man to destruction,*" or "to dust." Man's body is resolved into its elements, and is as though it had been crushed and ground to powder. "*And sayest, Return, ye children of men,*" i.e., return even to the dust out of which ye were taken. The frailty of man is thus forcibly set forth; God creates him out of the dust, and back to dust he goes at the word of his Creator. God resolves and man dissolves. A word created and a word destroys. Observe how the action of God is recognised; man is not said to die because of the decree of fate, or the action of inevitable law, but the Lord is made the agent of all, his hand turns and his voice speaks; without these we should not die, no power on earth or hell could kill us.

"An angel's arm can't save me from the grave,  
Myriads of angels can't confine me there."

4. "*For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.*" A thousand years! This is a long stretch of time. How much may be crowded into it,—the rise and fall of empires, the glory and obliteration of dynasties, the beginning and the end of elaborate systems of human philosophy, and countless events, all important to household and individual, which elude the pens of historians. Yet this period, which might even be called the limit of modern history, and is in human language almost identical with an indefinite length of time, is to the Lord as nothing, even as time already gone. A moment yet to come is longer than "yesterday when it is past," for that no longer exists at all, yet such is a chiliad to the Eternal. In comparison with eternity, the most lengthened reaches of time are mere points, there is, in fact, no possible comparison between them. "*And as a watch in the night,*" a time which is no sooner come than gone. There is scarce time enough in a thousand years for the angels to change watches; when their millennium of service

is almost over it seems as though the watch were newly set. We are dreaming through the long night of time, but God is ever keeping watch, and a thousand years are as nothing to him. A host of days and nights must be combined to make up a thousand years to us, but to God, that space of time does not make up a whole night, but only a brief portion of it. If a thousand years be to God as a single night-watch, what must be the life-time of the Eternal!

5. "*Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" As when a torrent rushes down the river-bed and bears all before it, so does the Lord bear away by death the succeeding generations of men. As the hurricane sweeps the clouds from the sky, so time removes the children of men. "*They are as a sleep.*" Before God men must appear as unreal as the dreams of the night, the phantoms of sleep. Not only are our plans and devices like a sleep, but we ourselves are such. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." "*In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*" As grass is green in the morning and hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours. We are not cedars, or oaks, but only poor grass, which is vigorous in the spring, but lasts not a summer through. What is there upon earth more frail than we!

6. "*In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.*" Blooming with abounding beauty till the meadows are all besprent with gems, the grass has a golden hour, even as man in his youth has a heyday of flowery glory. "*In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*" The scythe ends the blossoming of the field-flowers, and the dews at night weep their fall. Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more. Natural decay would put an end both to us and the grass in due time; few, however, are left to experience the full result of age, for death comes with his scythe, and removes our life in the midst of its verdure. How great a change in how short a time! The morning saw the blooming, and the evening sees the withering.

7. This mortality is not accidental, neither was it inevitable in the original of our nature, but sin has provoked the Lord to anger, and therefore thus we die. "*For we are consumed by thine anger.*" This is the scythe which mows and the scorching heat which withers. This was specially the case in reference to the people in the wilderness, whose lives were cut short by justice on account of their waywardness; they failed, not by a natural decline, but through the blast of the well-deserved judgments of God. It must have been a very mournful sight to Moses to see the whole nation melt away during the forty years of their pilgrimage, till none remained of all that came out of Egypt. As God's favour is life, so his anger is death; as well might grass grow in an oven as men flourish when the Lord is wroth with them. "*And by thy wrath are we troubled,*" or terror-stricken. A sense of divine anger confounded them, so that they lived as men who knew that they were doomed. This is true of us in a measure, but not altogether, for now that immortality and life are brought to light by the gospel, death has changed its aspect, and, to believers in Jesus, it is no more a judicial execution. Anger and wrath are the sting of death, and in these believers have no share; love and mercy now conduct us to glory by the way of the tomb. It is not seemly to read these words at a Christian's funeral without words of explanation, and a distinct endeavour to show how little they belong to believers in Jesus, and how far we are privileged beyond those with whom he was not well pleased, "*whose carcases fell in the wilderness.*" To apply an ode, written by the leader of the legal dispensation under circumstances of peculiar judgment, in reference to a people under penal censure, to those who fall asleep in Jesus, seems to be the height of blundering. We may learn much from it, but we ought not to misapply it by taking to ourselves, as the beloved of the Lord, that which was chiefly true of those to whom God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. When, however, a soul is under conviction of sin, the language of this Psalm is highly appropriate to his case, and will naturally suggest itself to the distracted mind. No fire consumes like God's anger, and no anguish so troubles the heart as his wrath. Blessed be that dear substitute,

"Who bore that we might never bear  
His Father's righteous ire."

8. "*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.*" Hence these tears! Sin seen by God must work death; it is only by the covering blood of atonement that life comes to any of us. When God was overthrowing the tribes in the wilderness he had their iniquities before him, and therefore dealt with them in severity. He could

not have their iniquities before him and not smite them. "*Our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*" There are no secrets before God; he unearths man's hidden things, and exposes them to the light. There can be no more powerful luminary than the face of God, yet, in that strong light, the Lord set the hidden sins of Israel. Sunlight can never be compared with the light of him who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If by his countenance is here meant his love and favour, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to one so infinitely good and kind. Rebellion in the light of justice is black, but in the light of love it is devilish. How can we grieve so good a God? The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a high hand, fed in the wilderness with a liberal hand, and guided with a tender hand, and their sins were peculiarly atrocious. We, too, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by abounding grace, will be verily guilty if we forsake the Lord. What manner of persons ought we to be? How ought we to pray for cleansing from secret faults?

It is to us a wellspring of delights to remember that our sins, as believers, are now cast behind the Lord's back, and shall never be brought to light again: therefore we live, because, the guilt being removed, the death-penalty is removed also.

9. "*For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.*" Justice shortened the days of rebellious Israel; each halting place became a graveyard; they marked their march by the tombs they left behind them. Because of the penal sentence their days were dried up, and their lives wasted away. "*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*" Yea, not their days only, but their *years* flew by them like a thought, swift as a meditation, rapid and idle as a gossip's story. Sin had cast a shadow over all things, and made the lives of the dying wanderers to be both vain and brief. The first sentence is not intended for believers to quote, as though it applied to themselves, for our days are all passed amid the lovingkindness of the Lord, even as David says in the twenty-third Psalm, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Neither is the life of the gracious man unsubstantial as a story-teller's tale; he lives in Jesus, he has the divine Spirit within him, and to him "life is real, life is earnest"—the simile only holds good if we consider that a holy life is rich in interest, full of wonders, chequered with many changes, yet as easily ordered by Providence as the improvisatore arranges the details of the story with which he beguiles the hour. Our lives are illustrations of heavenly goodness, parables of divine wisdom, poems of sacred thought, and records of infinite love; happy are we whose lives are such tales.

10. "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten.*" Moses himself lived longer than this, but his was the exception not the rule: in his day life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us. This is brevity itself compared with the men of the elder time, it is nothing when contrasted with eternity. Yet is life long enough for virtue and piety, and all too long for vice and blasphemy. Moses here in the original writes in a disconnected manner, as if he would set forth the utter insignificance of man's hurried existence. His words may be rendered, "The days of our years! In them seventy years:" as much as to say, "The days of our years? What about them? Are they worth mentioning? The account is utterly insignificant, their full tale is but seventy." "*And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow.*" The unusual strength which overleaps the bound of threescore and ten only lands the aged man in a region where life is a weariness and a woe. The strength of old age, its very prime and pride, are but labour and sorrow; what must its weakness be? What panting for breath! What toiling to move! What a failing of the senses! What a crushing sense of weakness! The evil days are come and the years wherein a man cries, "I have no pleasure in them." The grasshopper has become a burden and desire faileth. Such is old age. Yet mellowed by hallowed experience, and solaced by immortal hopes, the latter days of aged Christians are not so much to be pitied as envied. The sun is setting and the heat of the day is over, but sweet is the calm and cool of the eventide; and the fair day melts away, not into a dark and dreary night, but into a glorious, unclouded, eternal day. The mortal fades to make room for the immortal; the old man falls asleep to wake up in the region of perennial youth. "*For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" The cable is broken and the vessel sails upon the sea of eternity; the chain is snapped and the eagle mounts to its native air above the clouds. Moses mourned for men as he thus sung; and well he might, as all his comrades fell at his side. His words are more nearly rendered,

"He drives us fast and we fly away;" as the quails were blown along by the strong west wind, so are men hurried before the tempests of death. To us, however, as believers, the winds are favourable; they bear us as the gales bear the swallows away from the wintry realms, to lands

"Where everlasting spring abides  
And never withering flowers."

Who wishes it to be otherwise? Wherefore should we linger here? What has this poor world to offer us that we should tarry on its shores? Away, away! This is not our rest. Heavenward, Ho! Let the Lord's winds drive fast if so he ordains, for they waft us the more swiftly to himself, and our own dear country.

11. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" Moses saw men dying all around him: he lived among funerals, and was overwhelmed at the terrible results of the divine displeasure. He felt that none could measure the might of the Lord's wrath. "*Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Good men dread that wrath beyond conception, but they never ascribe too much terror to it: bad men are dreadfully convulsed when they awake to a sense of it, but their horror is not greater than it had need be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Holy Scripture when it depicts God's wrath against sin never uses an hyperbole: it would be impossible to exaggerate it. Whatever feelings of pious awe and holy trembling may move the tender heart, it is never too much moved; apart from other considerations the great truth of the divine anger, when most powerfully felt, never impresses the mind with a solemnity in excess of the legitimate result of such a contemplation. What the power of God's anger is in hell, and what it would be on earth, were it not in mercy restrained, no man living can rightly conceive. Modern thinkers rail at Milton and Dante, Bunyan and Baxter, for their terrible imagery; but the truth is that no vision of poet, or denunciation of holy seer, can ever reach to the dread height of this great argument, much less go beyond it. The wrath to come has its horrors rather diminished than enhanced in description by the dark lines of human fancy; it baffles words, it leaves imagination far behind. Beware ye that forget God lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. God is terrible out of his holy places. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah! Remember Korah and his company! Mark well the graves of lust in the wilderness! Nay, rather bethink ye of the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Who is able to stand against this justly angry God? Who will dare to rush upon the bosses of his buckler, or tempt the edge of his sword? Be it ours to submit ourselves as dying sinners to this eternal God, who can, even at this moment, command us to the dust, and thence to hell.

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, and the years *wherein* we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

12. "*So teach us to number our days.*" Instruct us to set store by time, mourning for that time past wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh, using diligently the time present, which is the accepted hour and the day of salvation, and reckoning the time which lieth in the future to be too uncertain to allow us safely to delay any gracious work or prayer. Numeration is a child's exercise in arithmetic, but in order to number their days aright the best of men need the Lord's teaching. We are more anxious to count the stars than our days, and yet the latter is by far more practical. "*That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Men are led by reflections

upon the brevity of time to give their earnest attention to eternal things; they become humble as they look into the grave which is so soon to be their bed, their passions cool in the presence of mortality, and they yield themselves up to the dictates of unerring wisdom; but this is only the case when the Lord himself is the teacher; he alone can teach to real and lasting profit. Thus Moses prayed that the dispensations of justice might be sanctified in mercy. "The law is our school-master to bring us to Christ," when the Lord himself speaks by the law. It is most meet that the heart which will so soon cease to beat should while it moves be regulated by wisdom's hand. A short life should be wisely spent. We have not enough time at our disposal to justify us in misspending a single quarter of an hour. Neither are we sure of enough of life to justify us in procrastinating for a moment. If we were wise in heart we should see this, but mere head wisdom will not guide us aright.

13. "*Return, O Lord, how long?*" Come in mercy to us again. Do not leave us to perish. Suffer not our lives to be both brief and bitter. Thou hast said to us, "Return, ye children of men," and now we humbly cry to thee, "Return, thou preserver of men." Thy presence alone can reconcile us to this transient existence; turn thou unto us. As sin drives God from us, so repentance cries to the Lord to return to us. When men are under chastisement they are allowed to expostulate, and ask "how long?" Our fault in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him. "*And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.*" Thus Moses acknowledges the Israelites to be God's servants still. They had rebelled, but they had not utterly forsaken the Lord; they owned their obligations to obey his will, and pleaded them as a reason for pity. Will not a man spare his own servants? Though God smote Israel, yet they were his people, and he had never disowned them, therefore is he entreated to deal favourably with them. If they might not see the promised land, yet he is begged to cheer them on the road with his mercy, and to turn his frown into a smile. The prayer is like others which came from the meek lawgiver when he boldly pleaded with God for the nation; it is Moses-like. He here speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

14. "*O satisfy us early with thy mercy.*" Since they must die, and die so soon, the Psalmist pleads for speedy mercy upon himself and his brethren. Good men know how to turn the darkest trials into arguments at the throne of grace. He who has but the heart to pray need never be without pleas in prayer. The only satisfying food for the Lord's people is the favour of God; this Moses earnestly seeks for, and as the manna fell in the morning he beseeches the Lord to send at once his satisfying favour, that all through the little day of life they might be filled therewith. Are we so soon to die? Then, Lord, do not starve us while we live. Satisfy us at once, we pray thee. Our day is short and the night hastens on, O give us in the early morning of our days to be satisfied with thy favour, that all through our little day we may be happy. "*That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*" Being filled with divine love, their brief life on earth would become a joyful festival, and would continue so as long as it lasted. When the Lord refreshes us with his presence, our joy is such that no man can take it from us. Apprehensions of speedy death are not able to distress those who enjoy the present favour of God; though they know that the night cometh they see nothing to fear in it, but continue to live while they live, triumphing in the present favour of God and leaving the future in his loving hands. Since the whole generation which came out of Egypt had been doomed to die in the wilderness, they would naturally feel despondent, and therefore their great leader seeks for them that blessing which, beyond all others, consoles the heart, namely, the presence and favour of the Lord.

15. "*Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.*" None can gladden the heart as thou canst, O Lord, therefore as thou hast made us sad be pleased to make us glad. Fill the other scale. Proportion thy dispensations. Give us the lamb, since thou has sent us the bitter herbs. Make our days as long as our nights. The prayer is original, childlike, and full of meaning; it is moreover based upon a great principle in providential goodness, by which the Lord puts the good over against the evil in due measure. Great trial enables us to bear great joy, and may be regarded as the herald of extraordinary grace. God's dealings are according to scale; small lives are small throughout; and great histories are great both in sorrow and happiness. Where there are high hills there are also deep valleys. As God provides the sea for leviathan, so does he find a pool for the minnow; in the sea all things are in fit proportion for the mighty monster, while in the little brook all things befit the tiny fish. If we have

ferce afflictions we may look for overflowing delights, and our faith may boldly ask for them. God who is great in justice when he chastens will not be little in mercy when he blesses, he will be great all through; let us appeal to him with unstaggering faith.

16. "*Let thy work appear unto thy servants.*" See how he dwells upon that word *servants*. It is as far as the law can go, and Moses goes to the full length permitted him: henceforth Jesus calls us not servants but friends, and if we are wise we shall make full use of our wider liberty. Moses asks for displays of divine power and providence conspicuously wrought, that all the people might be cheered thereby. They could find no solace in their own faulty works, but in the work of God they would find comfort. "*And thy glory unto their children.*" While their sons were growing up around them, they desired to see some outshinings of the promised glory gleaming upon them. Their sons were to inherit the land which had been given them by covenant, and therefore they sought on their behalf some tokens of the coming good, some morning dawns of the approaching noonday. How eagerly do good men plead for their children. They can bear very much personal affliction if they may but be sure that their children will know the glory of God, and thereby be led to serve him. We are content with the work if our children may but see the glory which will result from it: we sow joyfully if they may reap.

17. "*And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.*" Even upon us who must not see thy glory in the land of Canaan; it shall suffice us if in our characters the holiness of God is reflected, and if over all our camp the lovely excellences of our God shall cast a sacred beauty. Sanctification should be the daily object of our petitions. "*And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*" Let what we do be done in truth, and last when we are in the grave; may the work of the present generation minister permanently to the building up of the nation. Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing, and therefore they cry to him for help in the work, for acceptance of their efforts, and for the establishment of their designs. The church as a whole earnestly desires that the hand of the Lord may so work with the hand of his people, that a substantial, yea, an eternal edifice to the praise and glory of God may be the result. We come and go, but the Lord's work abides. We are content to die, so long as Jesus lives and his kingdom grows. Since the Lord abides for ever the same, we trust our work in his hands, and feel that since it is far more his work than ours he will secure it immortality. When we have withered like grass, our holy service, like gold, silver, and precious stones, will survive the fire.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Title.*—The correctness of the title which ascribes the Psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the Law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked likeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally, the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author.—*J. A. Alexander.*

*Title.*—"A prayer of Moses." Moses may be considered as the first composer of sacred hymns.—*Samuel Burder.*

*Title.*—The Psalm is described in the title as a *prayer*. This description shews, as Amyraldus saw, that the kernel of the Psalm is the *second* part, and that the design of the first is to prepare the way for the second, and lay down a basis on which it may rest.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

*Title.*—"A prayer of Moses." Moses was an old and much-tried man, but age and experience had taught him that, amidst the perpetual changes which are taking place in the universe, one thing at least remains immutable, even the faithfulness of him who is "from everlasting to everlasting God." How far back into the past may the patriarch have been looking when he spake these words? The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God is the Rock, his work perfect, all his ways judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4). But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said, "Remember the days of old, consider the years

of many generations" (Deut. xxxii. 7), and we may be sure that he was also looking beyond them when he indited the song, "*Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*" Yes; he was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can do more. At this point of time I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling-place of those that trust in him from generation to generation. Yes; and to him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amidst the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is my God.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion," 1870.*

*Whole Psalm.*—Although some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that "man of God" whose name it has always carried. If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other Psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.—*James Hamilton.*

*Whole Psalm.*—The 90th Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions—the deepest in feeling—the loftiest in theologic conception—the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life—as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal—the Sovereign and the Judge; and yet the refuge and hope of men, who, notwithstanding the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in him; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near-at-hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality; for in the very plaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these, his few years of trouble, and their brevity, and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety: the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance—the half-uttered blasphemy—the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous colour upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish, personal or relative. There are few probably among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood—the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes throughout this ode. Rightly attributed to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively, by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late—a lost age in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm, undoubtedly, is centuries older than the moralizings of that time when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind—the abstractions of the Greek Philosophy.

With this one Psalm only in view—if it were required of us to say, in brief, what we mean by the phrase—"The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry"—we find our answer well condensed in this sample. This magnificent composition gives evidence, not merely as to the mental qualities of the writer, but as to the tastes and habitudes of the writer's contemporaries, his hearers, and his readers; on these several points—*first*, the free and customary command of a poetic diction, and its facile imagery; so that whatever the poetic soul would utter, the poet's material is near at hand for his use. There is then that depth of feeling—mournful, reflective, and yet hopeful and trustful, apart from which poetry can win for itself no higher esteem than what we bestow upon other decorative arts, which minister to the demands of luxurious sloth. There is, moreover, as we might say, underlying this poem, from the first



line to the last, the substance of philosophic thought, apart from which, expressed or understood, poetry is frivolous, and is not in harmony with the seriousness of human life: this Psalm is of a sort which Plato would have written, or Sophocles—if only the one or the other of these minds had possessed a heaven-descended Theology.—*Isaac Taylor.*

*Verse 1.*—“*Lord.*” Observe the change of the Divine names in this Psalm. Moses begins with the declaration of the Majesty of the Lord (*Adonai*), but when he arrives at ver. 13, he opens his prayer with the Name of grace and covenanted mercy to Israel—*JEHOVAH*; and he sums up all in ver. 17, with a supplication for the manifestation of the beauty עֲבוֹר of “the Lord our God” (*JEHOVAH, ELOHIM*).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

*Verse 1.*—“*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place.*” Many seem to beg God’s help in prayer, but are not protected by him: they seek it only in a storm, and when all other means and refuges fail them. But a Christian must maintain constant communication with God; must dwell in God, not run to him now and then.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse 1.*—This exordium breathes life, and pertains to a certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal life. Since he calls God, who is eternal, our habitation, or to speak more clearly, our place of refuge, to whom fleeing we may be in safety. For if God is our dwelling-place, and God is life, and we dwellers in him, it necessarily follows, that we are in life, and shall live for ever. . . . For who will call God the dwelling-place of the dead? Who shall regard him as a sepulchre? He is life; and therefore they also live to whom he is a dwelling-place. After this fashion Moses, in the very introduction, before he lets loose his horrible thunderings and lightnings, fortifies the trembling, that they may firmly hold God to be the living dwelling-place of the living, of those that pray to him, and put their trust in him.

It is a remarkable expression, the like of which is nowhere in Sacred Scripture, that God is a *dwelling-place*. Scripture in other places says the very opposite, it calls men temples of God, in whom God dwells; “the temple of God is holy,” says Paul, “which temple ye are.” Moses inverts this, and affirms, we are inhabitants and masters in this house. For the Hebrew word יְרוּך properly signifies a dwelling place, as when the Scripture says, “In Zion is his dwelling place,” where this word (*Maon*) is used. But because a house is for the purpose of safety, it results, that this word has the meaning of a refuge or place of refuge. But Moses wishes to speak with such great care that he may show that all our hopes have been placed most securely in God, and that they who are about to pray to this God may be assured that they are not afflicted in this work in vain, nor die, since they have God as a place of refuge, and the divine Majesty as a dwelling-place, in which they may rest secure for ever. Almost in the same strain Paul speaks, when he says to the Colossians, “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” For it is a much clearer and more luminous expression to say, Believers dwell in God, than that God dwells in them. He dwelt also visibly in Zion, but the place is changed. But because he (the believer) is in God, it is manifest, that he cannot be moved nor transferred, for God is a habitation of a kind that cannot perish. Moses therefore wished to exhibit the most certain life, when he said, God is our dwelling place, not the earth, not heaven, not paradise, but simply God himself. If after this manner you take this Psalm it will become sweet, and seem in all respects most useful. When a monk, it often happened to me when I read this Psalm, that I was compelled to lay the book out of my hand. But I knew not that these errors were not addressed to an awakened mind. I knew not that Moses was speaking to a most obdurate and proud multitude, which neither understood nor cared for the anger of God, nor were humbled by their calamities, or even in prospect of death.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse 1.*—“*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place,*” etc. In this first part the prophet acknowledgeth that God in all times, and in all ages hath had a special care of his saints and servants, to provide for them all things necessary for this life; for under the name of “*dwelling place,*” or *manston house*, the prophet understandeth all helps and comforts necessary for this life, both for maintenance and protection. For the use of such houses was wont to be not only to defend men from the injury of the weather, and to keep safely, within the walls and under the roof all other things necessary for this life, and to be a place of abode, wherein men might the more commodiously provide for all other things necessary, and walk in some calling

profitable to their neighbour and to the glory of God; but also to protect them from the violence of brute beasts and rage of enemies. Now the prophet herein seems to note a special and more immediate providence of God; (for of all kind of people they seemed to be most forsaken and forlorn); that whereas the rest of the world seemed to have their habitations and mansions rooted in the earth, and so to dwell upon the earth; to live in cities and walled towns in all wealth and state; God's people were as it were without house and home. Abraham was called out of his own country, from his father's house, where no doubt he had goodly buildings and large revenues, and was commanded by God to live as a foreigner in a strange country, amongst savage people, that he knew not; and to abide in tents, booths, and cabins, having little hope to live a settled and comfortable life in any place. In like manner lived his posterity, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, wandering from place to place in the land of Canaan; from thence translated into the land of Egypt, there living at courtesy, and as it were tenants at will, and in such slavery and bondage, that it had been better for them to have been without house and home. After this for forty years together (at which time this Psalm was penned) they wandered up and down in a desolate wilderness, removing from place to place, and wandering, as it were in a maze. So that of all the people of the earth, God's own people had hitherto lived as pilgrims and banished persons, without house or home; and therefore the prophet here professeth that God himself more immediately by his extraordinary providence, for many ages together had protected them, and been as it were a mansion house unto them; that is, the more they were deprived of these ordinary comforts of this life, the more was God present with them, supplying by his extraordinary and immediate providence what they wanted in regard of ordinary means. The due consideration of this point may minister matter of great joy and comfort to such children of God as are thoroughly humbled with the consideration of man's mortality in general, or of theirs whom they rely and depend upon in special.—*William Bradshaw*, 1621.

*Verse 1.*—“*Our dwelling place.*” God created the earth for beasts to inhabit, the sea for fishes, the air for fowls, and heaven for angels and stars, so that man hath no place to dwell and abide in but God alone.—*Giovanni della Mirandola Pico*, 1463—1494.

*Verses 1, 2.*—The comfort of the believer against the miseries of this short life is taken from the decree of their election, and the eternal covenant of redemption settled in the purpose and counsel of the blessed Trinity for their behoof, wherein it was agreed before the world was, that the *Word* to be incarnate, should be the Saviour of the elect: for here the asserting of the eternity of God is with relation to his own chosen people; for “*Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations,*” and, “*thou art God from everlasting to everlasting,*” is in substance thus much:—Thou art from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God in purpose and affection toward us thy people, and so thou art *our God* from everlasting, in regard of thy eternal purpose of love, electing us, and in regard of thy appointing redemption for us by the Redeemer.—*David Dickson*.

*Verses 1, 2.*—If man be ephemeral, God is eternal.—*James Hamilton*.

*Verses 1—6.*—

“O Lord, thou art our home, to whom we fly,  
And so hast always been, from age to age;  
Before the hills did intercept the eye,  
Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,  
One God thou wert, and art, and still shall be;  
The line of time, it doth not measure thee.

Both death and life obey thy holy lore,  
And visit in their turns as they are sent;  
A thousand years with thee they are no more  
Than yesterday, which, ere it is, is spent:  
Or as a watch by night, that course doth keep,  
And goes and comes, unwares to them that sleep.

Thou carryest man away as with a tide:  
Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high;  
Much like a mocking dream, that will not bide,  
But flies before the sight of waking eye;  
Or as the grass, that cannot term obtain,  
To see the summer come about again.

At morning, fair it musters on the ground ;  
 At even it is cut down and laid along ;  
 And though it spared were, and favour found,  
 The weather would perform the mower's wrong ;  
 Thus hast thou hanged our life on brittle pins,  
 To let us know it will not bear our sins."

—Francis Bacon.

Verse 2.—“*The earth and the world.*” The word *earth* here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven (Gen. i. 1), or from the sea (Gen. i. 10). The term “*world*” in the original is commonly employed to denote the earth considered as *inhabited*, or as capable of being inhabited, a dwelling-place for living beings.—Albert Barnes.

Verse 2.—“*From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*” The everlastingness of which Moses speaks is to be referred not only to the essence of God, but also to his providence, by which he governs the world. He intends not merely that he is, but that he is God.—John Calvin.

Verse 2.—Such a God (he says) have we, such a God do we worship, to such a God do we pray, at whose command all created things sprang into being. Why then should we fear if this God favours us? Why should we tremble at the anger of the whole world? If he is our dwelling-place, shall we not be safe though the heavens should go to wrack? For we have a Lord greater than all the world. We have a Lord so mighty that at his word all things sprang into being. And yet we are so fainthearted that if the anger of a single prince or king, nay, even of a single neighbour, is to be borne, we tremble and droop in spirit. Yet in comparison with this King, all things beside in the whole world are but as the lightest dust which a slight breath moves from its place, and suffers not to be still. In this way this description of God is consolatory, and trembling spirits ought to look to this consolation in their temptations and dangers.—Martin Luther.

Verse 3.—“*Thou turnest man to destruction,*” etc. The prophet conceiveth of God as of a *potter*, that having of dust tempered a mass, and framed it into a vessel, and dried it, doth presently, within a minute or an hour after, dash it again in pieces, and beat it to dust, in passion as it were speaking unto it, “*Get thee to dust again.*” The word here translated “*destruction,*” signifies a beating, or grinding, or pounding of a thing to powder. And the prophet seems to allude to the third of Genesis, where God speaks of Adam, “*Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,*” as if he should say, O Lord, thou that hast made and framed man of the dust of the earth, thou beatest him to dust again; and as thou madest him by thy word alone, so with thy word thou suddenly turnest, and beatest him again to dust; as a man that makes a thing, and presently mars it again. . . . He doth it with a word, against which is no resistance, when that word is once come out of his mouth; it is not all the diet, physic, and help, and prayers in the world that can save the life. And this he can do suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. And therefore we should, as we love our lives, fear him, and take heed how we offend and displease him that can with a word turn the strongest man into dust.—William Bradshaw.

Verse 3.—“*Thou turnest man to destruction,*” etc. The first word for “*man,*” signifies a man full of misery, full of sicknesses and infirmities, a miserable man, *who*. And the other word here used in the end of the verse, signifies a man made of *clay*, or of the very slime of the earth. From hence we learn what is the nature of all men, of all the sons of Adam, viz., a piece of living *clay*, a little piece of red earth. And besides that man is subject to *breaking* and *crushing*, every way a miserable man; so is he of a brittle mould, a piece of red clay, that hath in it for a time a living soul, which must return to God that gave it; and the body, this piece of earth, return to the earth from whence it came: and if we had no Scripture at all to prove this, daily experience before our eyes makes it clear how all men, even the wisest, the strongest, the greatest and the mightiest monarchs and princes in the world, be but miserable men, made of red earth, and monically turn again to dust.—Samuel Smith, in “*Moses his Prayer,*” 1656.

Verse 3.—“*Thou turnest man to destruction.*” Augustine says, We walk amid perils. If we were glass vases we might fear less dangers. What is there more fragile than a vase of glass? And yet it is preserved, and lasts for centuries: we therefore are more frail and infirm.—Le Blanc.

*Verse 3.*—"Return ye." One being asked what life was? made an answer answerless, for he presently turned his back and went his way.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 4.*—"A thousand years," etc. As to a very rich man a thousand sovereigns are as one penny; so, to the eternal God, a thousand years are as one day.—*John Albert Bengel, 1687—1752.*

*Verse 4.*—The Holy Ghost expresseth himself according to the manner of men, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to our capacity. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions five hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all these, for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse 4.*—"As yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." He corrects the previous clause with an extraordinary abbreviation. For he says that the whole space of human life, although it may be very long, and reach a thousand years, yet with God it is esteemed not only as one day, which has already gone, but is scarcely equal to the fourth part of a night. For the nights were divided into four watches, which lasted three hours each. And indeed by the word *night*, it is meant that human affairs in this life are involved in much darkness, many errors, dangers, terrors and sorrows.—*Mollerus.*

*Verse 4.*—"As a watch in the night." The night is wont to appear shorter than the day, and to pass more swiftly, because those who sleep, says Euthymius, notice not the lapse of time. On account of the darkness also, it is less observed; and to those at work the time seems longer, than to those who have their work done.—*Lorinus.*

*Verse 4.*—"A watch in the night." Sir John Chardin observes in a note on this verse, that as the people of the East have no clocks, the several parts of the day and of the night, which are eight in all, are given notice of. In the Indies, the parts of the night are made known as well by instruments of music in great cities, as by the rounds of the watchmen, who with cries, and small drums, give them notice that a fourth part of the night is passed. Now as these cries awaked those who had slept all that quarter part of the night, it appeared to them but as a moment.—*Harmer's Observations.*

*Verse 4.*—The ages and the dispensations, the promise to Adam, the engagement with Noah, the oath to Abraham, the covenant with Moses—these were but watches, through which the children of men had to wait amid the darkness of things created, until the morning should dawn of things uncreated. Now is "the night far spent, and the day at hand."—*Plain Commentary.*

*Verse 5.*—"Thou carriest them away as with a flood." זָרַמְתָּ (*zeram-tam*) thou hast inundated them, namely, the years of man, i.e., thou hast hurried them away with a flood, thou hast made them to glide away as water, they will be as a sleep.—*Bythner's "Lyre of David."*

*Verse 5.*—"Thou carriest them away as with a flood." Let us meditate seriously upon the swift passage of our days, how our life runs away like a stream of waters, and carrieth us with it. Our condition in the eyes of God in regard of our life in this world is as if a man that knows not how to swim, should be cast into a great stream of water, and be carried down with it, so that he may sometimes lift up his head or his hands, and cry for help, or catch hold of this thing and that, for a time, but his end will be drowning, and it is but a small time that he can hold out, for the flood which carries him away will soon swallow him up. And surely our life here if it be rightly considered, is but like the life of a person thus violently carried down a stream. All the actions and motions of our life are but like unto the strivings and strugglings of a man in that case: our eating, our drinking, our physic, our sports, and all other actions are but like the motions of the sinking man. When we have done all that we can, die we must, and be drowned in this deluge.—*William Bradshaw.*

*Verse 5.*—"Away as with a flood." "A man is a bubble," said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents to this purpose, saying, "All the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations like bubbles. Some of these instantly sink

into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die; others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy, and being crushed in by a great drop from a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth; the change not being great; it being hardly possible that a bubble should be more a nothing than it was before."—*Jeremy Taylor*.

*Verse 5 (first clause).*—The most ancient mode of measuring small portions of time was by water flowing out of a vessel, the clepsydra of the Greeks and Romans; and Ovid has compared the lapse of time to the flowing of a river [Metam. xv. 180].—*Stephen Street*.

*Verse 5.*—"They are as a sleep." For as in the visions of sleep, we seeing, see not, hearing we hear not, tasting or touching we neither taste nor touch, speaking we speak not, walking we walk not; but when we seem to employ movements and gestures, in no respect do we employ them, since the mind vainly forms without any real objects images of things that exist not, as if they existed. In this very way, the imaginations of those who are awake closely resemble dreams; they come, they go, they confront us and flee from us; before they are seized, they fly away.—*Philo, in Le Blanc*.

*Verse 5.*—"They are as a sleep." Our life may be compared to sleep in four respects. 1. In regard of the shortness of it. 2. In regard of the easiness of being put out of it. 3. In regard of the many means to disquiet and break it off. 4. With regard to the many errors in it.

For the first three. Sleep is but short, and the sweeter it is, the shorter it seems to be. And as it is but short of itself, though it should last the full swing of nature; so the soundest sleep is easily broken; the least knock, the lowest call puts men out of it; and a number of means and occasions there be to interrupt and break it off. And is it not so with the life of man? Is not the longest life short? Is it not the shorter, the sweeter and fuller of contents it is? And is it not easily taken away? Are there not many means to bring us unto our end? even as many as there are to waken us out of sleep.

For the fourth. How many errors are we subject to in sleep? In sleep the prisoner many times dreams that he is at liberty; he that is at liberty, that he is in prison; he that is hungry, that he is feeding daintily; he that is in want, that he is in great abundance; he that abounds, that he is in great want. How many in their sleep have thought they have gotten that which they shall be better for for ever, and when they are even in the hope of present possessing some such goodly matter, or beginning to enjoy it, or in the midst of their joy, they are suddenly awakened, and then all is gone with them, and their golden fancies vanish away in an instant. So for evil and sorrow as well. And is it not just so in the life of man?—*William Bradshaw*.

*Verse 5.*—"They are like grass." In this last similitude, the prophet compares men to grass, that as grass hath a time of growing and a time of withering, even so has man. "In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up." In which words Moses compares the former part of man's life, which is the space of thirty-three years, to the time of growing of grass, and that is accounted the time of the perfection of man's strength and age; at which age, according to the course of nature, man flourisheth as grass doth; that is the time of a man's prime and flourishing estate.

But "in the evening"; that is, when the grass is ripe, and ready to be cut down, "it withereth." Even so man, being once at his strength, and ripest age, doth not stand at a stay, nor continueth long so; but presently begins to decay, and to wither away, till old age comes, and he is cut down by the scythe of death.

Now, in that Moses useth so many similitudes, and all to show how frail this life of man is, we are taught, that the frailty, vanity, and shortness of man's life is such, that examples will scarcely shew it. Death comes as a flood, violently and suddenly; we are as a sleep; we are as grass; our life is like a dream; we spend our days as a tale that is told, verse 9. All these similitudes Moses hath in this Psalm, as if he wanted words and examples, how to express the vanity, frailty, and shortness thereof.—*Samuel Smith*.

*Verse 6.*—"In the morning." This can hardly mean "in early youth," as some of the Rabbis explain. The words, strictly speaking, are a part of the comparison ("they are as grass which springeth afresh in the morning"), and are only thus

placed first to give emphasis to the figure. In the East, one night's rain works a change as if by magic. The field at evening was brown, parched, arid as a desert; in the morning it is green with the blades of grass. The scorching hot wind (James I. 11) blows upon it, and again before evening it is withered.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

*Verse 6.*—"Cut down."

Stout and strong to-day,  
To-morrow turned to clay.

This day in his bloom,  
The next, in the tomb.

It is true that to some Death sends his grey harbingers before, and gives them timely warning of his approach. But in how many cases does he arrive unannounced, and, lifting up his scythe, mow down the lofty! On shipboard there is but a plank between us and death; on horseback, but a fall. As we walk along the streets, Death stretches a threatening finger from every tile upon the roofs! "He comes up into our windows, and enters into our palaces; he cuts off the children from without, and the young men from the streets." Jer. ix. 21. Our life is less than an handbreadth. How soon and how insensibly we slip into the grave!—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

*Verse 7.*—"For we are consumed by thine anger." This is a point disputed by philosophers. They seek for the cause of death, since indeed proofs of immortality that cannot be despised exist in nature. The prophet replies, that the chief cause must not be sought in the material, either in a defect of the fluids, or in a failure of the natural heat; but that God being offended at the sins of men, hath subjected this nature to death and other infinite calamities. Therefore, our sins are the causes which have brought down this destruction. Hence he says, *In thine anger we vanish away.*—*Mollerus.*

*Verse 7.*—"For we are consumed by thine anger," etc. Whence we may first of all observe, how they compare their present estate in the wilderness, with the estate of other nations and people, and shew that their estate was far worse than theirs: for others died now one, and then one, and so they were diminished; but for them, they were hastily consumed, and suddenly swept away by the plague and pestilence which raged amongst them. Hence we may observe, first of all—That it is a ground of humiliation to God's people when their estate is worse than God's enemies'. Moses gathers this as an argument to humble them, and to move them to repentance and to seek unto God; viz., that because of their sins they were in a far worse case and condition than the very enemies of God were. For though their lives were short, yet they confess that theirs was far worse than the very heathen themselves, for they were *suddenly consumed by his anger.* When God is worse to his own church and people than he is to his enemies; when the Lord sends wars in a nation called by his name, and peace in other kingdoms that are anti-Christian; sends famine in his church, and plenty to the wicked; sends the plague and pestilence in his church, and health and prosperity to the wicked; oh, here is matter of mourning and humiliation; and it is that which hath touched God's people to the quick, and wounded them to the heart, to see the enemies of the church in better condition than the church itself.—*Samuel Smith.*

*Verse 7.*—"By thy wrath are we troubled." The word used by Moses is much stronger than merely "troubled." It implies being cut off, destroyed—in forms moreover of overwhelming terror.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes." New York, 1872.*

*Verse 8.*—God needs no other light to discern our sins by but the light of his own face. It pierceth through the darkest places; the brightness thereof enlighteneth all things, discovers all things. So that the sins that are committed in deepest darkness are all one to him as if they were done in the face of the sun. For they are done in his face, that shines more, and from which proceeds more light than from the face of the sun. So that this ought to make us the more fearful to offend; he sees us when we see not him, and the light of his countenance shines about us when we think ourselves hidden in darkness.

Our sins are not only then in his sight when they are a committing and whilst the deed is doing; but ever after, when the act is past and gone and forgotten,

yet then is it before the face of God, even as if it were in committing : and how should this make us afraid to sin ! When our sins are not only in his sight while they are a committing, but so continue still for ever after they are past and done.

God *sets our sins before him* ; this shows he is so affected with them, he takes them so to heart, that he doth in a special manner continue the remembrance of them. As those that having had great wrong will store it up, or register it, or keep some remembrance of it or other, lest they should forget, when time shall serve to be quit with those that have wronged them : so doth God, and his so doing is a sign that he takes our sins deeply to heart ; which should teach us to fear the more how we offend him. When God in any judgment of death, or sickness, or loss of friends, shews his wrath, we should think and meditate of this ; especially when he comes nearest us : Now the Lord looks upon my sins, they are now before him ; and we should never rest till we have by repentance moved him to blot them out. Yea, to this end we should ourselves call them to remembrance. For the more we remember them, the more God forgets them ; the more we forget them, the more God remembers them ; the more we look upon them ourselves, the more he turneth his eyes from them.—*William Bradshaw.*

*Verse 8.*—It is a well known fact that the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are very much affected by the situation in which they are placed in respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. Objects seen at a distance, for example, appear much smaller than they really are. The same object, viewed through different mediums, will often exhibit different appearances. A lighted candle, or a star, appears bright during the absence of the sun ; but when that luminary returns, their brightness is eclipsed. Since the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are thus affected by extraneous circumstances, it follows, that no two persons will form precisely the same ideas of any object, unless they view it in the same light, or are placed with respect to it in the same situation.

Apply these remarks to the case before us. The Psalmist addressing God, says, "*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*" That is, our iniquities or open transgressions, and our secret sins, the sins of our hearts, are placed as it were, full before God's face, immediately under his eye ; and he sees them in the pure, clear, all-disclosing light of his own holiness and glory. Now if we would see our sins as they appear to him, that is, as they really are, if we would see their number, blackness and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, we must place ourselves, as nearly as is possible, in his situation, and look at sin, as it were, through his eyes. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance, where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn, and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen and almost forgotten, and where consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works, and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

My hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colours ; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the brightness of unsullied purity, and the splendours of uncreated glory ; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot ; and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God, in whose presence you are, is the Being who forbids sin, the Being of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed.—*Edward Payson.*

*Verse 9.*—" *For all our days go back again (װײ) in thy wrath.*" Hitherto he has spoken of the cause of that wrath of God which moveth him to smite the world with such mortality. Now here he further sets forth the same by the effects thereof in reference to that present argument he hath in hand. 1. That our days do as it were go backward in his wrath : that whereas God gave us being to live, our life and our being are nothing else but a going backward, as it were, to death and to nothing. Even as if a stranger being suddenly rapt and carried mid-way to his home, where are all his comforts, he should spend all the time that is behind, not in going forward

to his home, but in going backward to the place from which he was suddenly brought. All the sons of Adam as soon as they have being and live are brought suddenly a great part of their way : and whereas they should go forward and live longer and longer, they from their first beginning to live go backward again to death and to nothing. This is the sum in effect of that which the Lord saith in the beginning of the Psalm, (ver. 3 :) "*Thou bringest men to destruction ; saying, Return again, ye sons of Adam :*" as if he should say, Thou makest a man, and when he is made, he in thy wrath doth haste to nothing else but destruction and to be marred again. Thus do our days as it were go backward, and we in them return from whence we came.—*William Bradshaw.*

*Verse 9.*—When I was in Egypt, three or four years ago, I saw what Moses himself might have seen, and what the Israelites, no doubt, very often witnessed :—a crowd of people surrounding a professed story-teller, who was going through some tale, riveting the attention and exciting the feelings of those who listened to him. This is one of the customs of the East. It naturally springs up among any people who have few books, or none ; where the masses are unable to read, and where, therefore, they are dependent for excitement or information on those who can address the ear, and who recite, in prose or verse, traditionary tales and popular legends. I dare say this sort of thing would be much in repute among the Israelites themselves during their detention in the wilderness, and that it served to beguile for them many a tedious hour. It is by this custom, then, that we venture to illustrate the statement of the text.

The hearing of a story is attended by a rapid and passing interest—it leaves behind it a vague impression, beyond which comparatively but few incidents may stand out distinctly in the after thought. In our own day even, when tales are put into printed books, and run through three or four volumes, we feel when we have finished one, how short it appears after all, or how short the time it seemed to take for its perusal. If full of incident, it may seem sometimes long to remember, but we generally come to the close with a sort of feeling that says, "And so that's all." But this must have been much more the case with the tales "that were told." These had to be compressed into what could be repeated at one time, or of which three or four might be given in an evening or an hour. The story ended ; and then came the sense of shortness, brevity, the rapid flight of the period employed by it, with something like a feeling of wonder and dissatisfaction at the discovery of this. "For what is your life ? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."—*Thomas Binney.*

*Verse 9.*—"As a tale." The grace whereof is brevity.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 9.*—"As a tale that is told." The Chaldee has it, *like the breath of our mouth in winter.*—*Daniel Cresswell.*

*Verse 9.*—The thirty-eight years, which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of "*a tale that is told ;*" for it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness ; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the rising. . . . The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one ; most mixed, but all short and transient ; that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse 9.*—"We spend our years as a tale that is told," or, as a meditation (so some translate) suddenly or swiftly : a discourse is quickly over, whether it be a discourse from the mouth, or in the mind ; and of the two the latter is far the more swift and nimble of foot. A discourse in our thoughts outruns the sun, as much as the sun outruns a snail ; the thoughts of a man will travel the world over in a moment ; he that now sits in this place, may be at the world's end in his thoughts, before I can speak another word.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 9.*—"We spend our years as a tale that is told." This seems to express both a necessary fact and a censure. The rapid consumption of our years—their speedy passing away, is inevitable. But they may be spent also in a trifling manner to little valuable purpose, which would complete the disconsolate reflection on them, by the addition of guilt and censure.—*John Foster, 1768—1843.*

*Verse 9.*—"As a tale that is told." In the Hebrew it is *בְּסִימָהּ*, *sicut meditatio*,



(as a meditation) and so we read it in the margin, as if all our years were little else than a continual meditation upon the things of this world. Indeed, much of man's time is spent in this kind of vain meditation, as how to deceive and play fast and loose for advantage; such a meditation had they, Isaiah lix. 13, or meditating with the heart lying words; the same word in the Hebrew as in my text; or how to heap up riches, such a meditation had that covetous man in the gospel, Luke xii. 17; or how to violate the sacred bonds of religion and laws of God, such a meditation had they, Ps. ii. 1—3; and in such vain meditations as these do men spend their years "as a tale that is told." . . .

To close this point with Gregory Nazianzen.

What are we but a vain dream that hath no existence or being, a mere phantasm or apparition that cannot be held, a ship sailing in the sea which leaves no impression or track behind it, a dust, a vapour, a morning dew, a flower flourishing one day and fading another, yea, the same day behold it springing and withered, but my text adds another metaphor from the flying of a bird, "and we fly away," not go and run but fly, the quickest motion that any corporeal creature hath. Our life is like the flight of a bird, 'tis here now and 'tis gone out of sight suddenly. The Prophet therefore speaking of the speedy departure of Ephraim's glory expresseth it thus, "It shall flee away like a bird," Hos. ix. 11; and Solomon saith the like of riches, "they make themselves wings and flee away like an eagle toward heaven"; Prov. xxiii. 5. David wished for the wings of a dove that he might flee away and be at rest, and good cause he had for it, for this life is not more short than miserable. . . .

Be it our care then not to come creeping and coughing to God with a load of diseases and infirmities about us, when we are at death's door and not before, but to consecrate the first fruits of our life to his service. It is in the spending our time (as one compares it) as in the distilling of waters, the thinnest and purest part runs out first and only the lees at last: what an unworthy thing will it be to offer the prime of our time to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the dregs of it to God. He that forbad the lame and the blind in beasts to be sacrificed, will not surely allow it in men; if they come not to present their bodies a living sacrifice, while they are living and lively too, ere they be lame or blind or deformed with extremity of age, it is even a miracle if it prove then a holy, acceptable, or reasonable service.—*Thomas Washbourne*, 1655.

*Verse 9 (second clause).*—The Hebrew is different from all the Versions. "We consume our years (קָמָה קָמָה *kemo hegeh*) like a groan." We live a dying, whining, complaining life, and at last a groan is its termination!—*Adam Clarke*.

*Verse 9.*—The Vulgate translation has, "Our years pass away like those of a spider." It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider's web. Constituted most curiously the spider's web is; but what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of the human body; and what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh; and vapours are rocks compared with life.—*C.H.S.*

*Verse 10.*—"It is soon cut off, and we fly away." At the Witan or council assembled by Edwin of Northumbria at Godmundingham (modern name Godmanham), to debate on the mission of Paulinus, the King was thus addressed by a heathen Thane, one of his chief men:—"The present life of man, O King, may be likened to what often happens when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes and nobles in winter-time. A fire blazes on the hearth, and warms the chamber; outside rages a storm of wind and snow; a sparrow flies in at one door of thy hall, and quickly passes out at the other. For a moment and while it is within, it is unharmed by the wintry blast, but this brief season of happiness over, it returns to that wintry blast whence it came, and vanishes from thy sight. Such is the brief life of man; we know not what went before it, and we are utterly ignorant as to what shall follow it. If, therefore, this new doctrine contain anything more certain, it justly deserves to be followed.—*Bede's Chronicle*.

*Verse 10.*—The time of our life is threescore years and ten (saith Moses), or set it upon the tenters, and rack it to fourscore, though not one in every fourscore arrives to that account, yet can we not be said to live so long; for take out, first, ten years for infancy and childhood, which Solomon calls the time of wantonness and vanity (Eccles. xi.), wherein we scarce remember what we did, or whether we lived or no; and how short is it then? Take out of the remainder a third part for sleep, wherein

like blocks we lie senseless, and how short is it then? Take out yet besides the time of our carking and worldly care, wherein we seem both dead and buried in the affairs of the world, and how short is it then? And take out yet besides, our times of wilful sinning and rebellion, for while we sin, we live not, but we are "*dead in sin,*" and what remaineth of life? yea, how short is it then? so short is that life which nature allows, and yet we sleep away part, and play away part, and the cares of the world have a great part, so that the true spiritual and Christian life hath little or nothing in the end.—*From a Sermon by Robert Wilkinson, entitled "A Meditation of Mortalitie, preached to the late Prince Henry, some few daies before his death," 1612.*

*Verse 10.*—"Threescore years and ten." It may at first seem surprising that Moses should describe the days of man as "*Threescore years and ten.*" But when it is remembered, that, in the second year of the pilgrimage in the wilderness, as related in Numbers xiv., God declared that all those who had been recently numbered at Sinai should die in the wilderness, before the expiration of forty years, the lamentation of Moses on the brevity of human life becomes very intelligible and appropriate; and the Psalm itself acquires a solemn and affecting interest, as a penitential confession of the sins which had entailed such melancholy consequences on the Hebrew nation; and as a humble deprecation of God's wrath; and as a funeral dirge upon those whose death had been pre-announced by the awful voice of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

*Verse 10.*—There have been several *gradual abbreviations* of man's life. Death hath been coming nearer and nearer to us, as you may see in the several ages and periods of the world. Adam, the first of human kind, lived nine hundred and thirty years. And seven or eight hundred years was a usual period of man's life before the Flood. But the Sacred History (which hath the advantage and pre-eminence of all other histories whatsoever, by reason of its antiquity) acquaints us that immediately after the Flood the years of man's life were shortened by no less than half. . . . *After the Flood* man's life was apparently shorter than it was before, for they fell from nine hundred, eight hundred, and seven hundred years to four hundred and three hundred, as we see in the age of Arphaxad, Salah, Heber: yea, they fell to two hundred and odd years, as we read of Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Tharah; yea, they came down to less than two hundred years. In the space of a few years man's life was again cut shorter by almost half, if not a full half. We read that Abraham lived but one hundred and seventy-five years, so that man's age ran very low then. See the account given in Scripture of Nahor, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (who died at a hundred) which confirms the same. And again the *third time*, man's life was shortened by almost *another half*, viz., about the year of the World 2,500, in Moses' time. For he sets the bounds of man's life thus: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Ps. xc. 10. Eighty years is the utmost limit he sets man's life at, *i.e.*, in the most ordinary and common account of man's life. Though some are of the opinion that these words do not give an account of the duration of man's life in general, but refer to the short lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet I do not see but it may take in both; and Moses who composed the Psalm, lived a hundred and twenty years himself, yet he might speak of the common term of man's life, and what usually happened to the generality of men.—*John Edwards.*

*Verse 10.*—"Their strength is labour and sorrow." Most commonly old age is a feeble estate; the very grasshopper is a burden to it. Eccl. xii. 5. Even the old man himself is a burden, to his wife, to his children, to himself. As Barzillai said to David, "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" 2 Sam. xix. 35. Old age, we say, is a good guest, and should be made welcome, but that he brings such a troop with him; blindness, aches, coughs, etc.; these are troublesome, how should they be welcome? "*Their strength is labour and sorrow.*" If their very strength, which is their best, be labour and grief, what is their worst?—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verse 10.*—"Their strength is labour and sorrow."—

Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,  
Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade.

—*Samuel Johnson, 1709—1784.*

Verse 10.—“*Their strength.*” Properly, “*the pride*” of the days of our life is labour and sorrow—*i.e.*, our days at their best.—*Barth’s “Bible Manual.”*

Verse 10.—“*We fly away.*”

Bird of my breast, away !  
The long-wish’d hour is come !  
On to the realms of cloudless day.  
On to thy glorious home !

Long has been thine to mourn  
In banishment and pain.  
Return, thou wand’ring dove, return,  
And find thy ark again !

Away, on joyous wing,  
Immensity to range ;  
Around the throne to soar and sing,  
And faith for sight exchange.

\* \* \* \* \*

Flee, then, from sin and woe,  
To joys immortal flee ;  
Quit thy dark prison-house below,  
And be for ever free !

I come, ye blessed throng,  
Your tasks and joys to share ;  
O, fill my lips with holy song,  
My drooping wing upbear.

—*Henry Francis Lyte, 1793—1847.*

Verse 11.—“*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*” We may take some scantling, some measure of the wrath of man, and know how far it can go, and what it can do, but we can take no measure of the wrath of God, for it is unmeasurable.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—“*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*” None at all ; and unless the power of that can be known, it must abide as unspeakable as the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 11.—Moses, I think, here means, that it is a holy awe of God, and that alone, which makes us truly and deeply feel his anger. We see that the reprobate, although they are severely punished, only chafe upon the bit, or kick against God, or become exasperated, or are stupefied, as if they were hardened against all calamities ; so far are they from being subdued. And though they are full of trouble, and cry aloud, yet the Divine anger does not so penetrate their hearts as to abate their pride and fierceness. The minds of the godly alone are wounded with the wrath of God ; nor do they wait for his thunder-bolts, to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks, but they tremble the very moment when God moves only his little finger. This I consider to be the true meaning of the prophet.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—“*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*” etc. The meaning is, What man doth truly know and acknowledge the power of thy anger, according to that measure of fear wherewith thou oughtest to be feared ? Note hence, how Moses and the people of God, though they feared God, yet notwithstanding confess that they failed in respect of that measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had ; for we must not think, but Moses and some of his people did truly fear God. But yet in regard of the power of God’s anger, which was now very great and grievous, their fear of God was not answerable and proportionable ; then it is apparent that Moses and this people failed in respect of the measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had, in regard of the greatness and grievousness of the judgments of God upon them.

See, that the best of God’s servants in this life fall short in their fear of God, and so in all graces of the Spirit ; in that love of God, in faith, in repentance, and in obedience, we come short all of us of that which the Lord requires at our hands. For though we do know God, and that he is a just God, and righteous, and cannot wink at sin ; yet what man is there that so fears before him as he ought to be feared ? what man so quakes at his anger as he should ; and is so afraid of sin as he ought to be ? We have no grace here in perfection, but the best faith is mixed with infidelity ; our hope with fear ; our joy with sorrow. It is well we can discern our

wants and imperfections, and cry out with the man in the gospel, " I believe ; Lord, help my unbelief ! "—*Samuel Smith.*

*Verse 11.*—" *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?* " No man knows the power of God's anger, because that power has never yet put itself forth to its full stretch. Is there, then, no measure of God's wrath—no standard by which we may estimate its intensity ? There is no fixed measure or standard, but there is a variable one. The wicked man's fear of God is a measure of the wrath of God. If we take the man as he may be sometime taken, when the angel of death is upon him, when the sins of his youth and of his maturer years throng him like an armed troop, and affright and afflict him—when with all his senses keenly alive to the rapid strides of bodily decay, he feels that he must die, and yet that he is not prepared—why, it may come to pass, it does occasionally, though not always come to pass, that his anticipations of the future are literally tremendous. There is such a fear and such a dread of that God into whose immediate presence he feels himself about to be ushered, that even they who love him best, and charm him most, shrink from the wildness of his gaze and the fearfulness of his speech. And we cannot tell the man, though he may be just delirious with apprehension, that his fear of God invests the wrath of God with a darker than its actual colouring. On the contrary, we know that "*according to the fear, so is the wrath.*" We know that if man's fear of God be wrought up to the highest pitch, and the mind throb so vehemently that its framework threaten to give way and crumble, we know that the wrath of the Almighty keeps pace with this gigantic fear. . . .

If it has happened to you—and there is not perhaps a man on the face of the earth to whom it does not sometimes happen—if it has ever happened to you to be crushed with the thought, that a life of ungodliness must issue in an eternity of woe, and if amid the solitude of midnight and amid the dejections of sickness there pass across the spirit the fitful figures of an avenging ministry, then we have to tell you, it is not the roar of battle which is powerful enough, nor the wail of orphans which is thrilling enough, to serve as the vehicle of such a communication ; we have to tell you, that you fly to a refuge of lies, if you dare flatter yourselves that either the stillness of the hour or the feebleness of disease has caused you to invest vengeance with too much of the terrible. We have to tell you, that the picture was not overdrawn which you drew in your agony. "*According to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Fear is but a mirror, which you may lengthen indefinitely, and widen indefinitely, and wrath lengthens with the lengthening and widens with the widening, still crowding the mirror with new and fierce forms of wasting and woe. We caution you, then, against ever cherishing the flattering notion, that fear can exaggerate God's wrath. We tell you, that when fear has done its worst, it can in no degree come up to the wrath which it images. . . .

Now, it is easy to pass from this view of the text to another, which is in a certain sense similar. You will always find, that men's apprehensions of God's wrath are nicely proportioned to the fear and reverence which are excited in them by the name and the attributes of God. He will have but light thoughts of future vengeance, who has but low thoughts of the character and properties of his Creator : and from this it comes to pass, that the great body of men betray a kind of stupid insensibility to the wrath of Jehovah. . . . Look at the crowd of the worldly and the indifferent. There is no fear of God in that crowd ; they are " of the earth earthy." The soul is sepulchred in the body, and has never wakened to a sense of its position with reference to a holy and avenging Creator. Now, then, you may understand the absence of all knowledge of the power of God's wrath. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger ? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse 11.*—" *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?* " etc. This he utters, 1. By way of lamentation. He sighing forth a most doleful complaint against the security and stupor he observed in that generation of men in his time, both in those that had already died in their sins, as well as of that new generation that had come up in their room, who still lived in their sins ; oh, says he, ' Who of them knoweth the power of thine anger ? ' namely, of that wrath which followeth after death, and seizeth upon men's souls for ever ; that is, who considers it, or regards it, till it take hold upon them ? He utters it, 2. In a way of astonishment, out of the apprehension he had of the greatness of that wrath. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?*" that is, who hath or can take it in according to the greatness of it ? which he endeavours to set forth, as applying himself to our own apprehension, in this wise, "*Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Where those words, "*thy*

*fear*” are taken *objective*, and so signify the *fear of thee*; and so the meaning is, that according to whatever proportion our souls can take in, in fears of thee and of thine anger, so great is thy wrath itself. You have souls that are able to comprehend vast fears and terrors; they are as extensive in their fears as in their desires, which are stretched beyond what this world or the creatures can afford them, to an infinity. The soul of man is a dark cell, which when it begets fears once, strange and fearful apparitions rise up in it, which far exceed the ordinary proportion of worldly evils (which yet also our fears usually make greater than they prove to be); but here, as to that punishment which is the effect of God’s own immediate wrath, let the soul enlarge itself, says he, and widen its apprehension to the utmost; fear what you can imagine, yet still God’s wrath, and the punishment it inflicts, are not only proportionable, but infinitely exceeding all you can fear or imagine. “*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*” It passeth knowledge.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

*Verse 12.*—“*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*” Moses who was learned in all the sciences of the Egyptians (among which arithmetic was one) desireth to learn this point of arithmetic only of thee, O Lord; and why? Is it because, as Job speaketh, thou hast determined the number of his days? Would Moses have thee reveal to every man the moment of his end? Such speculations may well beseem an Egyptian, an Israelite they do not beseem. Thy children, O Lord, know that it is not for them so to know times and seasons which thou keepest in thine own power, and are a secret sealed up with thee: we should not pry into that counting-house, nor curiously inquire into that sum. It is not then a mathematical numbering of days that Moses would be schooled in, but a moral; he would have God not simply to teach him to number, but to number “*so*”; and “*so*” points out a special manner, a manner that may be useful for the children of God. And indeed our petitions must bear this mark of profitable desires, and we should not ask aught of thee but that by which (if we speed) we may become the better; he that so studies his mortality learns it as he should, and it is only thou, O Lord, that takest him out such a lesson. But what is the use, O Moses, that thou wouldst have man make of such a knowledge? “*Even to apply his heart unto wisdom.*” O happy knowledge, by which a man becomes wise; for wisdom is the beauty of a reasonable soul. God created him therewith, but sin hath divorced the soul and wisdom; so that a sinful man is indeed no better than a fool, so the Scripture calleth him; and well it may call him so, seeing all his carriage is vain, and the upshot of his endeavours but vexation of spirit. But though sin have divorced wisdom and the soul, yet are they not so severed but they may be reunited; and nothing is more powerful in furthering this union than this feeling meditation—that we are mortal.—*Arthur Lake.*

*Verse 12.*—“*So teach us,*” etc. Moses sends you to God for teaching. “*Teach thou us; not as the world teacheth—teach thou us.*” No meaner Master; no inferior school; not Moses himself except as he speaks God’s word and becomes the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; not the prophets, not apostles themselves, neither “*holy men of old,*” except as they “*spake and were moved by the Holy Ghost.*” This knowledge comes not from flesh and blood, but from God. “*So teach thou us.*” And so David says, “*Teach me thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth.*” And hence our Lord’s promise to his disciples, “*The Holy Ghost, he shall teach you all things.*”—*Charles Richard Sumner, 1850.*

*Verse 12.*—“*Teach us to number our days.*” Mark what it is which Moses here prays for, only to be taught to number his days. But did he not do this already? Was it not his daily work this, his constant and continual employment? Yes, doubtless it was; yea, and he did it carefully and conscientiously too. But yet he thought he did it not well enough, and therefore prays here in the text to be taught to do better. See a good man, how little he pleaseth himself in any action of his life, in any performance of duty that he does. He can never think that he does well enough whatever he does, but still desires to do otherwise, and would fain do better. There is an affection of modesty and humility which still accompanies real piety; and every pious man is an humble, modest man, and never reckons himself a perfect proficient, or to be advanced above a teaching, but is content and covetous to be a continual learner; to know more than he knows and to do better than he does; yea, and thinks it no disparagement to his graces at all to take advice, and to seek instruction where it is to be had.—*Edm. Barker’s Funeral Sermon for Lady Capell. 1661.*

Verse 12.—“Teach us to number our days.”

“Improve Time in time, while the Time doth last,  
For all Time is no time, when the Time is past.”

—From Richard Pigot’s “*Life of Man, symbolised by the Months of the Year,*” 1866.

Verse 12.—“Teach us to number our days.” The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is prodigality of life: he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground. An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto that time was his estate; an estate, indeed, that will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun by noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use.—*Samuel Johnson.*

Verse 12.—“To number our days,” is not simply to take the reckoning and admeasurement of human life. This has been done already in Holy Scripture, where it is said, “*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*” Nor yet is it, in the world’s phrase, to calculate the chances of survivorship, which any man may do in the instance of the aggregate, but which no man can do in the case of the individual. But it is to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct, and in which it shall at last be absorbed. Under this aspect it is, that David contemplates man when he says, “*Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee,*” Ps. xxxix. 5; and then proceeds to include in this comprehensive estimate even those whose days have been the longest upon earth: “*Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.*”—*Thomas Dale, 1847.*

Verse 12.—“To number our days.” Number we our days by our daily prayers—number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love—number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Saviour’s peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us!—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 12.—“Apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, some months before his death said, That it was a great pity men knew not to what end they were born into this world, until they were ready to go out of it.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 12.—“Apply our hearts unto wisdom.” St. Austin says, “We can never do that, except we number every day as our last day.” Many put far the evil day. They refuse to leave the earth, when the earth is about to take its leave of them.—*William Secker.*

Verse 12.—“Apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Moses speaketh of wisdom as if it were physic, which doth no good before it be applied; and the part to apply it to is the heart, where all man’s affections are to love it and to cherish it, like a kind of hostess. When the heart seeketh it findeth, as though it were brought unto her, like Abraham’s ram. Therefore God saith, “They shall seek me and find me, because they shall seek me with their hearts,” Jer. xxix. 13; as though they should not find him with all their seeking unless they did seek him with their heart. Therefore the way to get wisdom is to apply your hearts unto it, as if it were your calling and living, to which you were bound ’prentices. A man may apply his ears and his eyes as many truants do to their books, and yet never prove scholars; but from that day when a man begins to apply his heart unto wisdom, he learneth more in a month after than he did in a year before, nay, than ever he did in his life. Even as you see the wicked, because they apply their hearts to wickedness, how fast they proceed, how easily and how quickly they become perfect swearers, expert drunkards, cunning deceivers, so if ye could apply your hearts as thoroughly to knowledge and goodness, you might become like the apostle which teacheth you. Therefore, when Solomon sheweth men the way how to come by wisdom, he speaks

often of the heart, as, "Give thine heart to wisdom," "let wisdom enter into thine heart," "get wisdom," "keep wisdom," "embrace wisdom," Prov. ii. 10, iv. 5, xiii. 8, as though a man went a wooing for wisdom. Wisdom is like God's daughter, that he giveth to the man that loveth her, and sueth for her, and meaneth to set her at his heart. Thus we have learned how to apply knowledge that it may do us good; not to our ears, like them which hear sermons only, nor to our tongues like them which make table-talk of religion, but to our hearts, that we may say with the virgin, "My heart doth magnify the Lord," Luke i. and the heart will apply it to the ear and to the tongue, as Christ saith, "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,*" Matt. xii. 34.—*Henry Smith.*

*Verse 12.*—Of all arithmetical rules this is the hardest—to number our days. Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can with a little pains number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable and therefore do never begin to number them. Who saith not upon the view of another, surely yonder man looketh by his countenance as if he would not live long, or yonder woman is old, her days cannot be many: thus we can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own, therefore this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days.—*Thomas Tymme.*

*Verse 12.*—Observe here, after that Moses had given us a description of the wrath of God, presently his thoughts are taken up with the meditation of death. The wrath of God thought on makes us think of death. . . . Let us often think of the wrath of God, and let the thought of it so far work upon us, as to keep us in a constant awe and fear of God; and let this fear drive us to God by prayer, that fearing as we ought, we may pray as we are commanded, and praying, we may prevent the wrath of God. If our present sorrows do not move us, God will send greater; and when our sorrows are grown too great for us, we shall have little heart or comfort to pray. Let our fears then quicken our prayers; and let our prayers be such as are able to overcome our fears: so both ways shall we be happy, in that our fears have taught us to pray, and our prayers have made us to fear no more.—*Christopher Shute, in "Ars piæ moriendi: or, The true Accomplant. A Sermon,"* etc., 1658.

*Verse 12.*—It is evident, that the great thing wanted to make men provide for eternity, is the practical persuasion that they have but a short time to live. They will not apply their hearts unto wisdom until they are brought to the numbering of their days. And how are you to be brought, my brethren? The most surprising thing in the text is, that it should be in the form of a prayer. It is necessary that God should interfere to make men number their days. We call this surprising. What! is there not enough to make us feel our frailty, without an actual, supernatural impression? What! are there not lessons enough of that frailty without any new teaching from above? Go into our churchyards—all ages speak to all ranks. Can we need more to prove to us the uncertainty of life? Go into mourning families—and where are they not to be found?—in this it is the old, in that it is the young, whom death has removed—and is there not eloquence in tears to persuade us that we are mortal? Can it be that in treading every day on the dust of our fathers, and meeting every day with the funerals of our brethren, we shall not yet be practically taught to number our days, unless God print the truth on our hearts, through some special operation of his Spirit? It is not thus in other things. In other things the frequency of the occurrence makes us expect it. The husbandman does not pray to be made believe that the seed must be buried and die before it will germinate. This has been the course of the grain of every one else, and where there is so much experience what room is there for prayer? The mariner does not pray to be taught that the needle of his compass points towards the north. The needle of every compass has so pointed since the secret was discovered, and he has not to ask when he is already so sure. The benighted man does not pray to be made to feel that the sun will rise in a few hours. Morning has succeeded to night since the world was made, and why should he ask what he knows too well to doubt? But in none of these things is there greater room for assurance than we have each one for himself, in regard to its being appointed to him once to die. Nevertheless, we must pray to be made to know—to be made to feel—that we are to die, in the face of an experience which is certainly not less than that of the parties to whom we have referred. This is a petition that we may believe, believe as they do: for they act on their belief in the fact, which this experience incontestably attests.

And we may say of this, that it is amongst the strangest of the strange things that may be affirmed of human nature, that whilst, in regard to inferior concerns, we can carefully avail ourselves of experience, taking care to register its decisions and to deduce from them rules for our guidance—in the mightiest concern of all we can act as though experience had furnished no evidence, and we were left without matter from which to draw inferences. And, nevertheless, in regard to nothing else is the experience so uniform. The grain does not always germinate—but every man dies. The needle does not always point due north—but every man dies. The sun does not cross the horizon in every place in every twenty-four hours—but every man dies. Yet we must pray—pray as for the revelation of a mystery hidden from our gaze—we must pray to be made to know—to be made to believe—that every man dies! For I call it not belief, and our text calls it not belief, in the shortness of life and the certainty of death, which allows men to live without thought of eternity, without anxiety as to the soul, or without an effort to secure to themselves salvation. I call it not belief—no, no, anything rather than belief. Men are rational beings, beings of forethought, disposed to make provision for what they feel to be inevitable; and if there were not a practical infidelity as to their own mortality, they could not be practically reckless as to their own safety.—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse 12.*—“*So teach us to number our days,*” etc. Five things I note in these words: first, that death is the haven of every man; whether he sit on the throne, or keep in a cottage, at last he must knock at death’s door, as all his fathers have done before him. Secondly, that man’s time is set, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass, no more than the Egyptians could pass the sea; and therefore Moses saith, “*Teach us to number our days,*” as though there were a number of our days. Thirdly, that our days are few, as though we were sent into this world but to see it; and therefore Moses, speaking of our life, speaks of days, not of years, nor of months, nor of weeks; but “*Teach us to number our days,*” shewing that it is an easy thing even for a man to number his days, they be so few. Fourthly, the aptness of man to forget death rather than anything else; and therefore Moses prayeth the Lord to teach him to number his days, as though they were still slipping out of his mind. Lastly, that to remember how short a time we have to live, will make us apply our hearts to that which is good.—*Henry Smith.*

*Verse 12.*—“*Our hearts.*” In both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the term “*heart*” is applied alike to the mind that thinks, to the spirit that feels, and the will that acts. And it here stands for the whole mental and moral nature of man, and implies that the whole soul and spirit, with all their might, are to be applied in the service of wisdom.—*William Brown Keer, 1863.*

*Verse 12.*—“*Wisdom.*” I consider this “*wisdom*” identical with the hypostatic *wisdom* described by Solomon, Prov. vii. 15—31, and ix. 1, 5, even Immanuel, the *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people. The chief pursuit of life should be the attainment of an experimental knowledge of Christ, by whom “*kings reign and princes decree justice; whose delights are with the sons of men, and who crieth, Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*” David in the Psalms, and Solomon, his son, in the Proverbs, have predictively manifested Messiah as the hypostatic *wisdom*, “*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*”—*J. N. Coleman.*

*Verse 13.*—“*Let it repent thee.*” According to the not unfrequent and well known phraseology of Scripture, God is said to repent, when putting away men’s sorrow, and affording new ground of gladness, he appears as it were to be changed.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 14.*—“*O satisfy us with thy mercy.*” A poor hungry soul lying under sense of wrath, will promise to itself happiness for ever, if it can but once again find what it hath sometimes felt; that is, one sweet fill of God’s sensible mercy towards it.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 14.*—“*O satisfy us.*” That is everywhere and evermore the cry of humanity. And what a strange cry it is, when you think of it, brethren! Man is the offspring of God; the bearer of his image; he stands at the head of the terrestrial creation; on earth he is peerless; he possesses wondrous capacities of thought, and feeling, and action. The world, and all that is in it, has been formed in a complete and beautiful adaptation to his being. Nature seems to be ever calling to him with a



thousand voices, to be glad and rejoice; and yet he is unsatisfied, discontented, miserable! This is a most strange thing—strange, that is, on any theory respecting man's character and condition, but that which is supplied by the Bible; and it is not only a testimony to the ruin of his nature, but also to the insufficiency of everything earthly to meet his cravings.—*Charles M. Merry, 1864.*

*Verse 14.*—“*O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*” We pass now to this particular prayer, and those limbs that make up the body of it. They are many; as many as words in it: satisfy, and satisfy us, and do that early, and do that with that which is thine, and let that be mercy. So that first it is a prayer for fulness and satisfaction,—*satisfy*: and then it is a prayer not only of appropriation to ourselves, satisfy me, but of a charitable dilation and extension to others, satisfy us, all us, all thy servants, all thy church; and then thirdly it is a prayer of despatch and expedition, “*Satisfy us early*”; and after that, it is a prayer of evidence and manifestation, satisfy us with that which is, and which we may discern to be *thine*; and then lastly it is a prayer of limitation even upon God himself, that God will take no other way herein but the way of “*mercy.*” “*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*” . . . . . There is a spiritual fulness in this life of which St. Hierome speaks, *Ebrietas felix, satietas salutaris*, A happy excess and a wholesome surfeit; *quæ quanto copiosius sumitur, majorem donat sobrietatem*. In which the more we eat, the more temperate we are, and the more we drink, the more sober. In which (as St. Bernard also expresses it in his mellifluous) *Mutua interminabili inexplicabili generatione, desiderium generat satietatem, et satietas parit desiderium*, By a mutual and reciprocal, by an undeterminable and inexpressible generation of one another, the desire of spiritual graces begets a satiety, and then this satiety begets a farther desire. This is a holy ambition, a sacred covetousness. Naphtali's blessing, “*O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord,*” Deut. xxxiii. 23; St. Stephen's blessing, “*Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,*” Acts vi. 5; the blessed Virgin's blessing, “*Full of grace*”; Dorcas' blessing, “*Full of good works and of alms-deeds,*” Acts ix. 36; the blessing of him who is blessed above all, and who blesseth all, even Christ Jesus, “*Full of wisdom, full of the Holy Ghost, full of grace and truth.*” Luke ii. 40, Luke iv. 1, John i. 14. . . . . “*Satisfy us early with*” that which is thine, “*thy mercy*”; for there are mercies (in a fair extent and accommodation of the word, that is refreshings, eases, deliverances), that are not *his* mercies, nor his satisfactions. . . . . It is not his mercy, except we go by good ways to good ends; except our safety be established by alliance with his friends, except our peace may be had with the perfect continuance of our religion, there is no safety, there is no peace. But let me feel the effect of this prayer, as it is a prayer of manifestation, let me discern that that which is done upon me is done by the hand of God, and I care not what it be, I had rather have God's vinegar, than man's oil, God's wormwood, than man's manna, God's justice, than any man's mercy; for therefore did Gregory Nyssen call St. Basil in a holy sense, *Ambidextrum*, because he took everything that came by the right handle, and with the right hand, because he saw it come from God. Even afflictions are welcome when we see them to be his: though the way that he would choose, and the way that this prayer entreats, be only mercy, “*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*”—*John Donne.*

*Verse 16.*—“*And thy glory unto their children.*” That is to say, that our children may see the glorious fruit of this affliction in us, that so they may not be discouraged thereby to serve thee, but rather the more heartened, when they shall see what a glorious work thou hast wrought in and upon us by afflicting us.—*William Bradshaw.*

*Verses 16, 17.*—“*Thy work.*” “*The work of our hands.*” You will observe a beautiful parallelism between two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency and man's instrumentality*, between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that had been his work.* And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. “*The work of our hands*” do thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, he adopts the works of his servants, and makes it his own “*work,*” his own “*glory,*” his own “*beauty.*”—*James Hamilton.*

*Verses 16, 17.*—There is a twofold Rabbinical tradition respecting this verse and the preceding one; that they were the original prayer recited by Moses as a

blessing on the work of making the Tabernacle and its ornaments, and that subsequently he employed them as the usual formula of benediction for any newly undertaken task, whenever God's *glorious Majesty* was to be consulted for an answer by Urim and Thummim.—*Lyranus, R. Shelomo, and Genebrardus, quoted by Neale.*

*Verses 16, 17.*—They were content to live and to die as pilgrims, provided only they could feel that in his sterner dealings with them God was, however slowly, preparing the way for that display of glorious blessedness which should be the lot of their descendants. In a similar spirit they ask God to establish the work of their hands, though they reckoned not that they should behold its results. Their comfort in sowing was the belief that their children would reap.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

*Verses 16, 17.*—It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labours of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. These were the most devoted to God of any generation that Israel ever saw. It was of them that the Lord said, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." It was then that Balaam could not curse, but, though desirous of the wages of unrighteousness, was compelled to forego them, and his curse was turned into a blessing. We are taught by this case, amidst temporal calamities and judgments, in which our earthly hopes may be in a manner extinguished, to seek to have the loss repaired by spiritual blessings. If God's work does but appear to us, and our posterity after us, we need not be dismayed at the evils which afflict the earth.—*Andrew Fuller.*

*Verse 17.*—"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," etc. Let us try to look at our life's work in relation to the Lord's beauty. Our *work* and *Divine Beauty*, at first sight, how different; yet, on deeper insight, how truly *one*, how inseparably united. There is light so beauty-giving, that nothing it touches is positively ugly. In our sea-girl island, with our fickle climate and grey atmosphere, we can only rarely imagine what magic power the serene skies, the balmy air, the sunny atmosphere of the South have over even the least interesting object in nature; but from certain hours, in certain places, I think we may form an idea of the transforming faculty of light.

There is also spiritual light, so beauty-inspiring, that the plainest face within which it is born is illumined with singular loveliness, which wins its way into many a heart. Who of us has not marvelled at an unexpected light, in what we had always thought an uninteresting face? Who has not beheld a light divine irradiate the human countenance, giving joy, and prophesying perfection, where we had least thought to find beauty? May we not take these facts as emblems, albeit faint and imperfect, of what the "*Beauty of the Lord*" does for us, and our work? You know what the natural light can do for material objects; you know what mental and moral light can work for human faces; rise from these, and know what spiritual light, Divine Light, can do for immortal beings and immortal works.—*Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life," 1867.*

*Verse 17.*—"The beauty of the Lord." In the word עֵי (beauty) there is something like a deluge of grace. Thus far, he says, we have sought thy work, O Lord. There we do nothing, but are only spectators and recipients of thy gifts, we are merely passive. There thou showest thyself to us, and makest us safe, by thy work alone, which thou doest, when thou dost liberate us from that disease which Satan inflicted on the whole human race in Adam, to wit, Sin and Eternal death.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse 17.*—God is glorified and his work advances when his church is beautiful. "*The beauty of the Lord*" is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of his Kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—*James Hamilton.*

*Verse 17.*—"The work of our hands." Jarchi interprets this of the work of the Tabernacle, in which the hands of the Israelites were employed in the wilderness; so Arama of the Tabernacle of Bezaleel.—*John Gill.*

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—The near and dear relation between God and his people, so that they mutually dwell in each other.

*Verse 1.*—The abode of the church the same in all ages; her relation to God never changes.

*Verse 1.*—I. The soul is at home in God. 1. Originally. Its birth-place—its native air—home of its thoughts, will, conscience, affections, desires. 2. Experimentally. When it returns here it feels itself at home: "Return unto thy rest," etc. 3. Eternally. The soul, once returned to this home, never leaves it: "it shall go no more out for ever." II. The soul is not at home elsewhere. "Our dwelling place," etc. 1. For all men. 2. At all times. He is ever the same, and the wants of the soul substantially are ever the same.—*G. R.*

*Verse 2.*—A Discourse upon the Eternity of God. S. Charnock. Works I. pp. 344—373, Nichol's Edition.

*Verse 2 (last clause).*—The consideration of God's eternity may serve, I. For the support of our faith; in reference to our own condition for the future; in reference to our posterity; and to the condition of God's church to the end of the world. II. For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God, who can give us an everlasting reward. III. For the terror of wicked men.—*Tillotson's Sermon on the Eternity of God.*

*Verse 3.*—I. The cause of death—"thou turnest." II. The nature of death—"return." III. The necessities of death—reconciliation with God, and preparation to return.

*Verse 4.*—I. Contemplate the lengthened period with all its events. II. Consider what he must be to whom all this is as nothing. III. Consider how we stand towards him.

*Verse 5.*—Comparison of mortal life to sleep. See William Bradshaw's remarks in our Notes on this verse.

*Verses 5, 6.*—The lesson of the Meadows. I. Grass growing the emblem of youth. II. Grass flowering—or man in his prime. III. The scythe. IV. Grass mown—or man at death.

*Verse 7.*—I. Man's chief troubles are the effect of death. 1. His own death. 2. The death of others. II. Death is the effect of Divine anger: "We are consumed by," etc. III. Divine anger is the effect of sin. Death by sin.—*G. R.*

*Verse 8.*—I. The notice which God takes of sin. 1. Individual. "Our iniquities." 2. Universal notice—"iniquities"—not one only, but all. 3. Minute, even the most secret sins. 4. Constant: "Set them before" him—"in the light," etc. II. The notice which we should take of them on that account. 1. In our thoughts. Set them before us. 2. In our consciences. Condemn ourselves on account of them. 3. In our wills. Turn from them by repentance—turn to a pardoning God by faith.—*G. R.*

*Verse 9.*—I. Every man has a history. His life is as a tale—a separate tale—to be told. II. Every man's history has some display of God in it. All our days, some may say, are passed away in thy wrath—all, others may say, in thy love—and others, some of our days in anger and some in love. III. Every man's history will be told. In death, at judgment, through eternity.—*G. R.*

*Verse 10.*—I. What life is to most. It seldom reaches its natural limits. One half die in childhood: more than half of the other half die in manhood; few attain to old age. II. What life is at most. "Threescore years," etc. III. What it is to most beyond that limit. "If by reason," etc. IV. What it is to all. "It is soon cut off," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse 11.*—I. The anger of God against sin is not fully known by its effects in this life. "Who knoweth the power," etc. Here we see the hidings of its power. II. The anger of God against sin hereafter is equal to our greatest fears. "According to thy fear," etc.; or, "the fear of thee," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse 12.*—I. The Reckoning. 1. What their usual number. 2. How many of them are already spent. 3. How uncertain the number that remains. 4. How much of them must be occupied with the necessary duties of this life. 5. What afflictions and helplessness may attend them. II. The use to be made of it. 1. To "seek wisdom"—not riches, worldly honours, or pleasures—but wisdom; not the wisdom of the world, but of God. 2. To "apply the heart" to it. Not mental

merely, but moral wisdom; not speculative merely, but experimental; not theoretical merely, but practical. 3. To seek it at once—immediately. 4. To seek it constantly—"apply our hearts," etc. III. The help to be sought in it. "So teach us," etc. 1. Our own ability is insufficient through the perversion both of the mind and heart by sin. 2. Divine help may be obtained. "If any man lack wisdom," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse 12.*—The Sense of Mortality. Show the variety of blessings dispensed to different classes by the right use of the sense of mortality. I. It may be an antidote for the sorrowful. Reflect, "there is an end." II. It should be a restorative to the labouring. III. It should be a remedy for the impatient. IV. As a balm to the wounded in heart. V. As a corrective for the worldly. VI. As a sedative to the frivolous.—*R. Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs," 1872.*

*Verse 13.*—In what manner the Lord may be said to repent.

*Verse 14 (first clause).*—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 513: "The Young Man's Prayer."

*Verse 14.*—I. The deepest yearning of man is for satisfaction. II. Satisfaction can only be found in the realization of Divine mercy.—*C. M. Merry, 1864.*

*Verse 14.*—"O satisfy us early with thy mercy," etc. Learn, 1. That our souls can have no solid satisfaction in earthly things. 2. That the mercy of God alone can satisfy our souls. 3. That nothing but satisfaction in God can fill our days with joy and gladness.—*John Cawood, 1842.*

*Verse 14.*—I. The most cheerful days of earth are made more cheerful by thoughts of Divine mercy. II. The most sorrowful days of earth are made glad by the consciousness of Divine love.—*G. R.*

*Verse 15.*—I. The joy of faith is in proportion to the sorrow of repentance. II. The joy of consolation is in proportion to suffering in affliction. III. The joy of the returning smiles of God is in proportion to the terror of his frowns.—*G. R.*

*Verse 15.*—The Balance of life, or the manner in which our joys are set over against our sorrows.

*Verse 16.*—I. Our duty—"work," and our desire about it. II. Our children's portion—"glory," and our prayer in reference to it.

*Verse 17.*—The Right Establishment, or the work which will endure—why it will endure and should endure. Why we wish our work to be of such a nature, and whether there are enduring elements in it.

