

## PSALM CXXXIX.

One of the most notable of the sacred hymns. It sings the omniscience and omnipresence of God, inferring from these the overthrow of the powers of wickedness, since he who sees and hears the abominable deeds and words of the rebellious will surely deal with them according to his justice. The brightness of this Psalm is like unto a sapphire stone, or Ezekiel's "terrible crystal"; it flames out with such flashes of light as to turn night into day. Like a Pharos, this holy song casts a clear light even to the uttermost parts of the sea, and warns us against that practical atheism which ignores the presence of God, and so makes shipwreck of the soul.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician. The last time this title occurred was in Psalm cix. This sacred song is worthy of the most excellent of the singers, and is fitly dedicated to the leader of the Temple psalmody, that he might set it to music, and see that it was devoutly sung in the solemn worship of the Most High. A Psalm of David. It bears the image and superscription of King David, and could have come from no other mint than that of the son of Jesse. Of course the critics take this composition away from David, on account of certain Aramaic expressions in it. We believe that upon the principles of criticism now in vogue it would be extremely easy to prove that Milton did not write *Paradise Lost*. We have yet to learn that David could not have used expressions belonging to "the language of the patriarchal ancestral house." Who knows how much of the antique speech may have been purposely retained among those nobler minds who rejoiced in remembering the descent of their race? Knowing to what wild inferences the critics have run in other matters, we have lost nearly all faith in them, and prefer to believe David to be the author of this Psalm, from internal evidences of style and matter, rather than to accept the determination of men whose modes of judgment are manifestly unreliable.

### EXPOSITION.

**O** LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

1. "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me." He invokes in adoration Jehovah the all-knowing God, and he proceeds to adore him by proclaiming one of his peculiar attributes. If we would praise God aright we must draw the matter of our praise from himself—"O Jehovah, thou hast." No pretended god knows aught of us; but the true God, Jehovah, understands us, and is most intimately acquainted with our persons, nature, and character. How well it is for us to know the God who knows us! The divine knowledge is extremely thorough and searching; it is as if he had searched us, as officers search a man for contraband goods, or as pillagers ransack a house for plunder. Yet we must not let the figure run upon all fours, and lead us further than it is meant to do: the Lord knows all things naturally and as a matter of course, and not by any effort on his part. Searching ordinarily implies a measure of ignorance which is removed by observation; of course this is not the case with the Lord; but the meaning of the Psalmist is, that the Lord knows us as thoroughly as if he had examined us minutely, and had pried into the most secret corners of our being. This infallible knowledge has always existed—"Thou hast searched me"; and it continues unto this day, since God

cannot forget that which he has once known. There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there never will be a moment in which we shall be beyond his observation. Note how the Psalmist makes his doctrine personal: he saith not, "O God, thou knowest all things"; but, "thou hast known me." It is ever our wisdom to lay truth home to ourselves. How wonderful the contrast between the observer and the observed! Jehovah and me! Yet this most intimate connection exists, and therein lies our hope. Let the reader sit still a while and try to realize the two poles of this statement,—the Lord and poor puny man—and he will see much to admire and wonder at.

2. "*Thou knowest my downsit-ting and mine uprising.*" Me thou knowest, and all that comes of me. I am observed when I quietly sit down, and marked when I resolutely rise up. My most common and casual acts, my most needful and necessary movements, are noted by thee, and thou knowest the inward thoughts which regulate them. Whether I sink in lowly self-renunciation, or ascend in pride, thou seest the motions of my mind, as well as those of my body. This is a fact to be remembered every moment: sitting down to consider, or rising up to act, we are still seen, known, and read by Jehovah our Lord. "*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*" Before it is my own it is foreknown and comprehended by thee. Though my thought be invisible to the sight, though as yet I be not myself cognizant of the shape it is assuming, yet thou hast it under thy consideration, and thou perceivest its nature, its source, its drift, its result. Never dost thou misjudge or wrongly interpret me: my inmost thought is perfectly understood by thine impartial mind. Though thou shouldst give but a glance at my heart, and see me as one sees a passing meteor moving afar, yet thou wouldst by that glimpse sum up all the meanings of my soul, so transparent is everything to thy piercing glance.

3. "*Thou compassest my path and my lying down.*" My path and my pallet, my running and my resting, are alike within the circle of thine observation. Thou dost surround me even as the air continually surrounds all creatures that live. I am shut up within the wall of thy being; I am encircled within the bounds of thy knowledge. Waking or sleeping I am still observed of thee. I may leave thy path, but thou never leavest mine. I may sleep and forget thee, but thou dost never slumber, nor fall into oblivion concerning thy creature. The original signifies not only surrounding, but winnowing and sifting. The Lord judges our active life and our quiet life; he discriminates our action and our repose, and marks that in them which is good and also that which is evil. There is chaff in all our wheat, and the Lord divides them with unerring precision. "*And art acquainted with all my ways.*" Thou art familiar with all I do; nothing is concealed from thee, nor surprising to thee, nor misunderstood by thee. Our paths may be habitual or accidental, open or secret, but with them all the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with awe, so that we sin not; with courage, so that we fear not; with delight, so that we mourn not.

4. "*For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.*" The unformed word, which lies within the tongue like a seed in the soil, is certainly and completely known to the Great Searcher of hearts. A negative expression is used to make the positive statement all the stronger: not a word is unknown is a forcible way of saying that every word is well known. Divine knowledge is perfect, since not a single word is unknown, nay, not even an unspoken word, and each one is "altogether" or wholly known. What hope of concealment can remain when the speech with which too many conceal their thoughts is itself transparent before the Lord? O Jehovah, how great art thou! If thine eye hath such power, what must be the united force of thine whole nature!

5. "*Thou hast beset me behind and before.*" As though we were caught in an ambush, or besieged by an army which has wholly beleaguered the city walls, we are surrounded by the Lord. God has set us where we be, and beset us wherever we be. Behind us there is God recording our sins, or in grace blotting out the remembrance of them; and before us there is God foreknowing all our deeds, and providing for all our wants. We cannot turn back and so escape him, for he is behind; we cannot go forward and outmarch him, for he is before. He not only beholds us, but he besets us; and lest there should seem any chance of escape, or lest we should imagine that the surrounding presence is yet a distant one, it is added,—"*And laid thine hand upon me.*" The prisoner marches along surrounded by a guard, and gripped by an officer. God is very near; we are wholly in his power; from that power there is no escape. It is not said that God *will* thus beset

us and arrest us, but it is done—"Thou hast beset me." Shall we not alter the figure, and say that our heavenly Father has folded his arms around us, and caressed us with his hand? It is even so with those who are by faith the children of the Most High.

6. "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.*" I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded at it. Such knowledge not only surpasses my comprehension, but even my imagination. "*It is high, I cannot attain unto it.*" Mount as I may, this truth is too lofty for my mind. It seems to be always above me, even when I soar into the loftiest regions of spiritual thought. Is it not so with every attribute of God? Can we attain to any idea of his power, his wisdom, his holiness? Our mind has no line with which to measure the Infinite. Do we therefore question? Say, rather, that we therefore believe and adore. We are not surprised that the Most Glorious God should in his knowledge be high above all the knowledge to which we can attain: it must of necessity be so, since we are such poor limited beings; and when we stand a-tip-toe we cannot reach to the lowest step of the throne of the Eternal.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.

9 *If* I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.

Here omnipresence is the theme,—a truth to which omniscience naturally leads up. "*Whither shall I go from thy spirit?*" Not that the Psalmist wished to go from God, or to avoid the power of the divine life; but he asks this question to set forth the fact that no one can escape from the all-pervading being and observation of the Great Invisible Spirit. Observe how the writer makes the matter personal to himself—"Whither shall I go?" It were well if we all thus applied truth to our own cases. It were wise for each one to say—The spirit of the Lord is ever around me: Jehovah is omnipresent to me. "*Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*" If, full of dread, I hastened to escape from that nearness of God which had become my terror, which way could I turn? "*Whither?*" "*Whither?*" He repeats his cry. No answer comes back to him. The reply to his first "*Whither?*" is its echo,—a second "*Whither?*" From the sight of God he cannot be hidden, but that is not all,—from the immediate, actual, constant presence of God he cannot be withdrawn. We must be, whether we will it or not, as near to God as our soul is to our body. This makes it dreadful work to sin; for we offend the Almighty to his face, and commit acts of treason at the very foot of his throne. Go from him, or flee from him we cannot: neither by patient travel nor by hasty flight can we withdraw from the all-surrounding Deity. His mind is in our mind; himself within ourselves. His spirit is over our spirit; our presence is ever in his presence.

8. "*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there.*" Filling the loftiest region with his yet loftier presence, Jehovah is in the heavenly place, at home, upon his throne. The ascent, if it were possible, would be unavailing for purposes of escape; it would, in fact, be a flying into the centre of the fire to avoid the heat. There would he be immediately confronted by the terrible personality of God. Note the abrupt words—"THOU, THERE." "*If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*" Descending into the lowest imaginable depths among the dead, there should we find the Lord. THOU! says the Psalmist, as if he felt that God was the one great Existence in all places. Whatever Hades may be, or whoever may be there, one thing is certain, *Thou, O Jehovah, art there*. Two regions, the one of glory and the other of darkness, are set in contrast, and this one fact is asserted of both—"thou art there." Whether we rise up or lie down, take our wing or make our

bed, we shall find God near us. A "behold" is added to the second clause, since it seems more a wonder to meet with God in hell than in heaven, in Hades than in Paradise. Of course the presence of God produces very different effects in these places, but it is unquestionably in each; the bliss of one, the terror of the other. What an awful thought, that some men seem resolved to take up their night's abode in hell, a night which shall know no morning.

9. "*If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.*"—If I could fly with all swiftness, and find a habitation where the mariner has not yet ploughed the deep, yet I could not reach the boundaries of the divine presence. Light flies with inconceivable rapidity, and it flashes far afield beyond all human ken; it illuminates the great and wide sea, and sets its waves gleaming afar; but its speed would utterly fail if employed in flying from the Lord. Were we to speed on the wings of the morning breeze, and break into oceans unknown to chart and map, yet there we should find the Lord already present. He who saves to the uttermost would be with us in the uttermost parts of the sea.

10. "*Even there shall thy hand lead me.*" We could only fly from God by his own power. The Lord would be leading, covering, preserving, sustaining us even when we were fugitives from him. "*And thy right hand shall hold me.*" In the uttermost parts of the sea my arrest would be as certain as at home: God's right hand would there seize and detain the runaway. Should we be commanded on the most distant errand, we may assuredly depend upon the upholding right hand of God as with us in all mercy, wisdom, and power. The exploring missionary in his lonely wanderings is led, in his solitary feebleness he is held. Both the hands of God are with his own servants to sustain them, and against rebels to overthrow them; and in this respect it matters not to what realms they resort, the active energy of God is around them still.

11. "*If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me.*" Dense darkness may oppress me, but it cannot shut me out from thee, or thee from me. Thou seest as well without the light as with it, since thou art not dependent upon light, which is thine own creature, for the full exercise of thy perceptions. Moreover, thou art present with me whatever may be the hour; and being present thou discoverest all that I think, or feel, or do. Men are still so foolish as to prefer night and darkness for their evil deeds; but so impossible is it for anything to be hidden from the Lord that they might just as well transgress in broad daylight.

Darkness and light in this agree;  
Great God, they're both alike to thee.  
Thine hand can pierce thy foes as soon  
Through midnight shades as blazing noon.

A good man will not wish to be hidden by the darkness, a wise man will not expect any such thing. If we were so foolish as to make sure of concealment because the place was shrouded in midnight, we might well be alarmed out of our security by the fact that, as far as God is concerned, we always dwell in the light; for even the night itself glows with a revealing force,—"*even the night shall be light about me.*" Let us think of this if ever we are tempted to take license from the dark—it is light about us. If the darkness be light, how great is that light in which we dwell! Note well how David keeps his song in the first person; let us mind that we do the same as we cry with Hagar, "Thou God seest me."

12. "*Yea,*" of a surety, beyond all denial. "*The darkness hideth not from thee;*" it veils nothing, it is not the medium of concealment in any degree whatever. It hides from men, but not from God. "*But the night shineth as the day:*" it is but another form of day: it shines, revealing all; it "*shineth as the day,*"—quite as clearly and distinctly manifesting all that is done. "*The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*" This sentence seems to sum up all that went before, and most emphatically puts the negative upon the faintest idea of hiding under the cover of night. Men cling to this notion, because it is easier and less expensive to hide under darkness than to journey to remote places; and therefore the foolish thought is here beaten to pieces by statements which in their varied forms effectually batter it. Yet the ungodly are still duped by their grovelling notions of God, and enquire, "How doth God know?" They must fancy that he is as limited in his powers of observation as they are, and yet if they would but consider for a moment they would conclude that he who could not see in the dark could not be God, and he who is not present everywhere could not be the Almighty Creator. Assuredly

God is in all places, at all times, and nothing can by any possibility be kept away from his all-observing, all-comprehending mind. The Great Spirit comprehends within himself all time and space, and yet he is infinitely greater than these, or aught else that he has made.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins : thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee ; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made : marvellous *are* thy works ; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect ; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them !

18 *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand : when I awake, I am still with thee.

13. "*For thou hast possessed my reins.*" Thou art the owner of my inmost parts and passions : not the indweller and observer only, but the acknowledged lord and possessor of my most secret self. The word "*reins*" signifies the kidneys, which by the Hebrews were supposed to be the seat of the desires and longings ; but perhaps it indicates here the most hidden and vital portion of the man ; this God doth not only inspect, and visit, but it is his own ; he is as much at home there as a landlord on his own estate, or a proprietor in his own house. "*Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*" There I lay hidden—covered by thee. Before I could know thee, or aught else, thou hadst a care for me, and didst hide me away as a treasure till thou shouldst see fit to bring me to the light. Thus the Psalmist describes the intimacy which God had with him. In his most secret part—his reins, and in his most secret condition—yet unborn, he was under the control and guardianship of God.

14. "*I will praise thee :*" a good resolve, and one which he was even now carrying out. Those who are praising God are the very men who *will* praise him. Those who wish to praise have subjects for adoration ready to hand. We too seldom remember our creation, and all the skill and kindness bestowed upon our frame : but the sweet singer of Israel was better instructed, and therefore he prepares for the chief musician a song concerning our nativity and all the fashioning which precedes it. We cannot begin too soon to bless our Maker, who began so soon to bless us : even in the act of creation he created reasons for our praising his name. "*For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" Who can gaze even upon a model of our anatomy without wonder and awe ? Who could dissect a portion of the human frame without marvelling at its delicacy, and trembling at its frailty ? The Psalmist had scarcely peered within the veil which hides the nerves, sinews, and blood-vessels from common inspection ; the science of anatomy was quite unknown to him ; and yet he had seen enough to arouse his admiration of the work and his reverence for the Worker. "*Marvellous are thy works.*" These parts of my frame are all *thy* works ; and though they be home works, close under my own eye, yet are they wonderful to the last degree. They are works within my own self, yet are they beyond my understanding, and appear to me as so many miracles of skill and power. We need not go to the ends of the earth for marvels, nor even across our own threshold ; they abound in our own bodies.

"*And that my soul knoweth right well.*" He was no agnostic—he knew ; he was no doubter—his soul knew ; he was no dupe—his soul knew right well. Those know indeed and of a truth who first know the Lord, and then know all things in him. He was made to know the marvellous nature of God's work with assurance and accuracy, for he had found by experience that the Lord is a master-worker, performing inimitable wonders when accomplishing his kind designs. If we are marvellously wrought upon even before we are born, what shall we say of the Lord's dealings with us after we quit his secret workshop, and he directs our pathway through the pilgrimage of life ? What shall we not say of that new birth which

is even more mysterious than the first, and exhibits even more the love and wisdom of the Lord.

15. "*My substance was not hid from thee.*" The substantial part of my being was before thine all-seeing eye; the bones which make my frame were put together by thine hand. The essential materials of my being before they were arranged were all within the range of thine eye. I was hidden from all human knowledge, but not from thee: thou hast ever been intimately acquainted with me. "*When I was made in secret.*" Most chastely and beautifully is here described the formation of our being before the time of our birth. A great artist will often labour alone in his studio, and not suffer his work to be seen until it is finished; even so did the Lord fashion us where no eye beheld us, and the veil was not lifted till every member was complete. Much of the formation of our inner man still proceeds in secret; hence the more of solitude the better for us. The true church also is being fashioned in secret, so that none may cry, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" as if that which is visible could ever be identical with the invisibly growing body of Christ. "*And curiously wrought it in the lowest parts of the earth.*" "Embroidered with great skill," is an accurate poetical description of the creation of veins, sinews, muscles, nerves, etc. What tapestry can equal the human fabric? This work is wrought as much in private as if it had been accomplished in the grave, or in the darkness of the abyss. The expressions are poetical, beautifully veiling, though not absolutely concealing, the real meaning. God's intimate knowledge of us from the beginning, and even before it, is here most charmingly set forth. Cannot he who made us thus wondrously when we were not, still carry on his work of power till he has perfected us, though we feel unable to aid in the process, and are lying in great sorrow and self-loathing, as though cast into the lowest parts of the earth?

16. "*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect.*" While as yet the vessel was upon the wheel the Potter saw it all. The Lord knows not only our shape, but our substance: this is substantial knowledge indeed. The Lord's observation of us is intent and intentional,—"*Thine eyes did see.*" Moreover, the divine mind discerns all things as clearly and certainly as men perceive by actual eye-sight. His is not hearsay acquaintance, but the knowledge which comes of sight. "*And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*" An architect draws his plans, and makes out his specifications; even so did the great Maker of our frame write down all our members in the book of his purposes. That we have eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, is all due to the wise and gracious purpose of heaven: it was so ordered in the secret decree by which all things are as they are. God's purposes concern our limbs and faculties. Their form, and shape, and everything about them were appointed of God long before they had any existence. God saw us when we could not be seen, and he wrote about us when there was nothing of us to write about. When as yet there were none of our members in existence, all those members were before the eye of God in the sketch-book of his foreknowledge and predestination.

This verse is an exceedingly difficult one to translate, but we do not think that any of the proposed amendments are better than the rendering afforded us by the Authorized Version. The large number of words in italics will warn the English reader that the sense is hard to come at, and difficult to express, and that it would be unwise to found any doctrine upon the *English* words; happily there is no temptation to do so.

The great truth expressed in these lines has by many been referred to the formation of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus. Of course, what is true of man, as man, is emphatically true of Him who is the representative man. The great Lord knows who belong to Christ; his eye perceives the chosen members who shall yet be made one with the living person of the mystical Christ. Those of the elect who are as yet unborn, or unrenewed, are nevertheless written in the Lord's book. As the form of Eve grew up in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus; or, to change the figure,—a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall for ever be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are his: he has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ; he sees their substance, unperfect though they be.

17. "*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!*" He is not alarmed at the fact that God knows all about him; on the contrary, he is comforted, and even feels himself to be enriched, as with a casket of precious jewels. That God

should think upon him is the believer's treasure and pleasure. He cries, "How costly, how valued are thy thoughts, how dear to me is thy perpetual attention!" He thinks upon God's thoughts with delight; the more of them the better he is pleased. It is a joy worth worlds that the Lord should think upon us who are so poor and needy: it is a joy which fills our whole nature to think upon God; returning love for love, thought for thought, after our poor fashion. "*How great is the sum of them!*" When we remember that God thought upon us from old eternity, continues to think upon us every moment, and will think of us when time shall be no more, we may well exclaim, "How great is the sum!" Thoughts such as are natural to the Creator, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Father, the Friend, are evermore flowing from the heart of the Lord. Thoughts of our pardon, renewal, upholding, supplying, educating, perfecting, and a thousand more kinds perpetually well up in the mind of the Most High. It should fill us with adoring wonder and reverent surprise that the infinite mind of God should turn so many thoughts towards us who are so insignificant and so unworthy! What a contrast is all this to the notion of those who deny the existence of a personal, conscious God! Imagine a world without a thinking, personal God! Conceive of a grim providence of machinery!—a fatherhood of law! Such philosophy is hard and cold. As well might a man pillow his head upon a razor edge as seek rest in such a fancy. But a God always thinking of us makes a happy world, a rich life, a heavenly hereafter.

18. "*If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.*" This figure shows the thoughts of God to be altogether innumerable; for nothing can surpass in number the grains of sand which belt the main ocean and all the minor seas. The task of counting God's thoughts of love would be a never-ending one. If we should attempt the reckoning we must necessarily fail, for the infinite falls not within the line of our feeble intellect. Even could we count the sands on the sea-shore, we should not then be able to number God's thoughts, for they are "more in number than the sand." This is not the hyperbole of poetry, but the solid fact of inspired statement: God thinks upon us infinitely: there is a limit to the act of creation, but not to the might of divine love.

"*When I am awake I am still with thee.*" Thy thoughts of love are so many that my mind never gets away from them, they surround me at all hours. I go to my bed, and God is my last thought; and when I wake I find my mind still hovering about his palace-gates; God is ever with me, and I am ever with him. This is life indeed. If during sleep my mind wanders away into dreams, yet it only wanders upon holy ground, and the moment I wake my heart is back with its Lord. The Psalmist does not say, "When I awake, I return to thee," but, "I am still with thee"; as if his meditations were continuous, and his communion unbroken. Soon we shall lie down to sleep for the last time: God grant that when the trumpet of the archangel shall waken us we may find ourselves still with him.

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.

21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.

24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

19. "*Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.*" There can be no doubt upon that head, for thou hast seen all their transgressions, which indeed have been done in thy presence; and thou hast long enough endured their provocations, which have been so openly manifest before thee. Crimes committed before the face of the Judge are not likely to go unpunished. If the eye of God is grieved with the presence of evil, it is but natural to expect that he will remove the offending object. God who sees all evil will slay all evil. With earthly sovereigns sin may go unpunished for lack of evidence, or the law may be left without execution from lack of vigour in the judge; but this cannot happen in the case of God, the living God. He beareth not the sword in vain. Such is his love of holiness and hatred of wrong,

that he will carry on war to the death with those whose hearts and lives are wicked. God will not always suffer his lovely creation to be defaced and defiled by the presence of wickedness : if anything is sure, this is sure, that he will ease him of his adversaries. "*Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.*" Men who delight in cruelty and war are not fit companions for those who walk with God. David chases the men of blood from his court, for he is weary of those of whom God is weary. He seems to say—If God will not let you live with him I will not have you live with me. You would destroy others, and therefore I want you not in my society. You will be destroyed yourselves, I desire you not in my service. Depart from me, for you depart from God. As we delight to have the holy God always near us, so would we eagerly desire to have wicked men removed as far as possible from us. We tremble in the society of the ungodly lest their doom should fall upon them suddenly, and we should see them lie dead at our feet. We do not wish to have our place of intercourse turned into gallows of execution, therefore let the condemned be removed out of our company.

20. "*For they speak against thee wickedly.*" Why should I bear their company when their talk sickens me? They vent their treasons and blasphemies as often as they please, doing so without the slightest excuse or provocation; let them therefore begone, where they may find a more congenial associate than I can be. When men speak against God they will be sure to speak against us, if they find it serve their turn; hence godless men are not the stuff out of which true friends can ever be made. God gave these men their tongues, and they turn against their Benefactor, wickedly, from sheer malice, and with great perverseness. "*And thine enemies take thy name in vain.*" This is their sport: to insult Jehovah's glorious name is their amusement. To blaspheme the name of the Lord is a gratuitous wickedness in which there can be no pleasure, and from which there can be no profit. This is a sure mark of the "enemies" of the Lord, that they have the impudence to assail his honour, and treat his glory with irreverence. How can God do other than slay them? How can we do other than withdraw from every sort of association with them? What a wonder of sin it is that men should rail against so good a Being as the Lord our God! The impudence of those who talk wickedly is a singular fact, and it is the more singular when we reflect that the Lord against whom they speak is all around them, and lays to heart every dishonour which they render to his holy name. We ought not to wonder that men slander and deride us, for they do the same with the Most High God.

21. "*Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?*" He was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." Truly, "jealousy is cruel as the grave." The loyal subject must not be friendly to the traitor. "*And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?*" He appeals to heaven that he took no pleasure in those who rebelled against the Lord; but, on the contrary, he was made to mourn by a sight of their ill behaviour. Since God is everywhere, he knows our feelings towards the profane and ungodly, and he knows that so far from approving such characters the very sight of them is grievous to our eyes.

22. "*I hate them with perfect hatred.*" He does not leave it a matter of question. He does not occupy a neutral position. His hatred to bad, vicious, blasphemous men is intense, complete, energetic. He is as whole-hearted in his hate of wickedness as in his love of goodness. "*I count them mine enemies.*" He makes a personal matter of it. They may have done him no ill, but if they are doing despite to God, to his laws, and to the great principles of truth and righteousness, David proclaims war against them. Wickedness passes men into favour with unrighteous spirits; but it excludes them from the communion of the just. We pull up the drawbridge and man the walls when a man of Belial goes by our castle. His character is a *casus belli*; we cannot do otherwise than contend with those who contend with God.

23. "*Search me, O God, and know my heart.*" David is no accomplice with traitors. He has disowned them in set form, and now he appeals to God that he



does not harbour a trace of fellowship with them. He will have God himself search him, and search him thoroughly, till every point of his being is known, and read, and understood; for he is sure that even by such an investigation there will be found in him no complicity with wicked men. He challenges the fullest investigation, the innermost search: he had need be a true man who can put himself deliberately into such a crucible. Yet we may each one desire such searching; for it would be a terrible calamity to us for sin to remain in our hearts unknown and undiscovered. "*Try me, and know my thoughts.*" Exercise any and every test upon me. By fire and by water let me be examined. Read not alone the desires of my heart, but the fugitive thoughts of my head. Know with all-penetrating knowledge all that is or has been in the chambers of my mind. What a mercy that there is one being who can know us to perfection! He is intimately at home with us. He is graciously inclined towards us, and is willing to bend his omniscience to serve the end of our sanctification. Let us pray as David did, and let us be as honest as he. We cannot hide our sin: salvation lies the other way, in a plain discovery of evil, and an effectual severance from it.

24. "*And see if there be any wicked way in me.*" See whether there be in my heart, or in my life, any evil habit unknown to myself. If there be such an evil way, take me from it, take it from me. No matter how dear the wrong may have become, nor how deeply prejudiced I may have been in its favour, be pleased to deliver me therefrom altogether, effectually, and at once, that I may tolerate nothing which is contrary to thy mind. As I hate the wicked in their way, so would I hate every wicked way in myself. "*And lead me in the way everlasting.*" If thou hast introduced me already to the good old way, be pleased to keep me in it, and conduct me further and further along it. It is a way which thou hast set up of old, it is based upon everlasting principles, and it is the way in which immortal spirits will gladly run for ever and ever. There will be no end to it world without end. It lasts for ever, and they who are in it last for ever. Conduct me into it, O Lord, and conduct me throughout the whole length of it. By thy providence, by thy word, by thy grace, and by thy Spirit, lead me evermore.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—Aben Ezra observes, that this is the most glorious and excellent Psalm in all the book: a very excellent one it is; but whether the most excellent, it is hard to say.—*John Gill.*

*Whole Psalm.*—There is one Psalm which it were well if Christians would do by it as Pythagoras by his Golden Precepts,—every morning and evening repeat it. It is David's appeal of a good conscience unto God, against the malicious suspicions and calumnies of men, in Psalm cxxxix.—*Samuel Annesley* (1620—1696), in "*The Morning Exercises.*"

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm is one of the sublimest compositions in the world. How came a shepherd boy to conceive so sublime a theme, and to write in so sublime a strain? Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. What themes are more sublime than the Divine attributes? And which of these attributes is more sublime than Omnipresence? Omniscience, spirituality, infinity, immutability and eternity are necessarily included in it.—*George Rogers.*

*Whole Psalm.*—Let the modern wits, after this, look upon the honest shepherds of Palestine as a company of *rude and unpolished clowns*; let them, if they can, produce from profane authors thoughts that are more sublime, more delicate, or better turned; not to mention the sound divinity and solid piety which are apparent under these expressions.—*Claude Fleury*, 1640—1723.

*Whole Psalm.*—Here the poet inverts his gaze, from the blaze of suns, to the strange atoms composing his own frame. He stands shuddering over the precipice of himself. Above is the All-encompassing Spirit, from whom the morning wings cannot save; and below, at a deep distance, appears amid the branching forest of his animal frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, the abyss of his spiritual existence, lying like a dark lake in the midst. How, between mystery and mystery his mind, his wonder, his very reason, seem to rock like a little boat between the

sea and sky. But speedily does he regain his serenity ; when he throws himself, with childlike haste and confidence, into the arms of that Fatherly Spirit, and murmurs in his bosom, " How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ; how great is the sum of them " ; and looking up at last in his face, cries—" Search me, O Lord. I cannot search thee ; I cannot search myself ; I am overwhelmed by those dreadful depths ; but search me as thou only canst ; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*George Gilfillan* (1813—1878), in "*The Bards of the Bible.*"

*Whole Psalm.*—The Psalm has an immediately practical aim, which is unfolded near the close. It is not an abstract description of the Divine attributes, with a mere indirect purpose in view. If God is such a being, if his vital agency reaches over all his creation, pervades all objects, illumines the deepest and darkest recesses ; if his knowledge has no limits, piercing into the mysterious processes of creation, into the smallest and most elemental germs of life ; if his eye can discern the still more subtle and recondite processes of mind, comprehending the half-formed conception, the germinating desire " afar off " ; if, anterior to all finite existence, his predetermining decree went forth ; if in those ancient records of eternity man's framework, with all its countless elements and organs, in all the ages of his duration, were inscribed—then for his servant, his worshipper on earth, two consequences follow, most practical and momentous : *first*, the ceasing to have or feel any complacency with the wicked, any sympathy with their evil ways, any communion with them as such ; and, *secondly*, the earnest desire that God would search the Psalmist's soul, lest in its unsounded depths there might be some lurking iniquity, lest there might be, beyond the present jurisdiction of his conscience, some dark realm which the Omniscent eye only could explore.—*Bela B. Edwards* (1802—1852), in *H. C. Fish's "Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence."*

*Whole Psalm.*—

Searcher of hearts ! to thee are known  
The inmost secrets of my breast ;  
At home, abroad, in crowds, alone,  
Thou mark'st my rising and my rest,  
My thoughts far off, through every maze,  
Source, stream, and issue—all my ways.

How from thy presence should I go,  
Or whither from thy Spirit flee,  
Since all above, around, below,  
Exist in thine immensity ?  
If up to heaven I take my way,  
I meet thee in eternal day.

If in the grave I make my bed  
With worms and dust, lo ! thou art there !  
If, on the wings of morning sped,  
Beyond the ocean I repair,  
I feel thine all-controlling will,  
And thy right hand upholds me still.

" Let darkness hide me," if I say,  
Darkness can no concealment be ;  
Night, on thy rising, shines like day ;  
Darkness and light are one with thee :  
For thou mine embryo-form didst view,  
Ere her own babe my mother knew.

In me thy workmanship display'd,  
A miracle of power I stand ;  
Fearfully, wonderfully made,  
And framed in secret by thine hand ;  
I lived, ere into being brought,  
Through thine eternity of thought.

How precious are thy thoughts of peace,  
O God, to me ! how great the sum !  
New every morn, they never cease ;  
They were, they are, and yet shall come,  
In number and in compass more  
Than ocean's sands or ocean's shore.

Search me, O God! and know my heart,  
 Try me, my inmost soul survey;  
 And warn thy servant to depart  
 From every false and evil way:  
 So shall thy truth my guidance be  
 To life and immortality.

James Montgomery.

*Whole Psalm.*—The Psalm may be thus summarized. Verse 1. “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.”—As though he said, “O LORD, thou art the heart-searching God, who perfectly knowest all the thoughts, counsels, studies, endeavours, and actions of all men, and therefore mine.” Verse 2. “Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.”—As if he had said, “Thou knowest my rest and motion, and my plodding thoughts of both.” Verse 3. “Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.”—As if he had said, “Thou fannest and winnowest me,” that is, “Thou discusses and triest me to the utmost.” Verse 4. “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.”—As if he had said, “I cannot speak a word, though never so secret, obscure, or subtle, but thou knowest what, and why, and with what mind it was uttered.” Verse 5. “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.”—As if he had said, “Thou keepest me within the compass of thy knowledge, like a man that will not let his servant go out of his sight. I cannot break away from thee.” Verse 6. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”—As if he had said, “The knowledge of thy great and glorious majesty and infiniteness is utterly past all human comprehension.” Verse 7. “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”—As if he had said, “Whither can I flee from thee, whose essence, presence, and power is everywhere?” Verse 8. “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.”—As if he had said, “There is no height above thee, there is no depth below thee.” Verse 9. “If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.”—As if he had said, “If I had wings to fly as swift as the morning light, from the east to the west, that I could in a moment get to the furthest parts of the world.” Verse 10. “Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”—As if he had said, “Thence shall thy hand lead me back, and hold me fast like a fugitive.” Verse 11. “If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.”—As if he had said, “Though darkness hinders man’s sight, it doth not thine.” In a word, look which way you will, there is no hiding-place from God. “For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves”: Job xxxiv. 21, 22. Therefore, Christians, do nothing but what you are willing God should take notice of; and judge in yourselves whether this be not the way to have a good and quiet conscience.—*Samuel Annesley.*

*Whole Psalm.*—In this Aramaizing Psalm what the preceding Psalm says in verse 6 comes to be carried into effect, viz.: “For Jahve is exalted and he seeth the lowly, and the proud he knoweth from afar.” This Psalm has manifold points of contact with its predecessor.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

“To the Chief Musician.”—As a later writer could have no motive for prefixing the title, “To the Chief Musician,” it affords an incidental proof of antiquity and genuineness.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

“A Psalm of David.”—How any critic can assign this Psalm to other than David I cannot understand. Every line, every thought, every turn of expression and transition, is his, and his only. As for the arguments drawn from the two Chaldaisms which occur, this is really nugatory. These Chaldaisms consist merely in the substitution of one letter for another, very like it in shape, and easily to be mistaken by a transcriber, particularly by one who had been used to the Chaldee idiom; but the moral arguments for David’s authorship are so strong as to overwhelm any such verbal, or rather *literal* criticism, were even the objections more formidable than they actually are.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1.—“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known (me).” There is no “me” after “known” in the Hebrew; therefore it is better to take the object after “known” in a wider sense. The omission is intentional, that the believing heart of all who use this Psalm may supply the ellipsis. Thou hast known and knowest *all that concerns the matter in question*, as well whether I and mine are guilty or innocent

(Ps. xlv. 21) ; also my exact circumstances, my needs, my sorrows, and the precise time when to relieve me.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse 1.*—"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me." The godly may sometimes be so overclouded with calumnies and reproaches as not to be able to find a way to clear themselves before men, but must content and comfort themselves with the testimony of a good conscience and with God's approbation of their integrity, as here David doth.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 1.*—"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me." David here lays down the great doctrine, that God has a perfect knowledge of us, First, *in the way of an address to God* : he saith it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over as when they are preached over : and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper. Secondly, he lays it down *in a way of application to himself* : not thou hast known all, but "thou hast known me" ; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider. Then we know things for our good when we know them for ourselves. Job v. 27. . . . David was a king, and "the hearts of kings are unsearchable" to their subjects (Prov. xxv. 3), but they are not so to their sovereign.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse 1.*—"O LORD, thou hast searched me." I would have you observe how thoroughly in the very first verse he brings home the truth to his own heart and his own conscience : "O LORD, thou hast searched me." He does not slur it over as a general truth, in which such numbers shared that he might hope to escape or evade its solemn appeal to himself ; but it is, "Thou hast searched me."—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Verse 1.*—"Searched." The Hebrew word originally means *to dig*, and is applied to the search for precious metals (Job xxviii. 3), but metaphorically to a moral inquisition into guilt.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verses 1—5.*—God knows everything that passes in our inmost souls better than we do ourselves : he reads our most secret thoughts : all the cogitations of our hearts pass in review before him ; and he is as perfectly and entirely employed in the scrutiny of the thoughts and actions of an individual, as in the regulation of the most important concerns of the universe. This is what we cannot comprehend ; but it is what, according to the light of reason, must be true, and, according to revelation, is indeed true. God can do nothing imperfectly ; and we may form some idea of his superintending knowledge, by conceiving what is indeed the truth, that all the powers of the Godhead are employed, and solely employed, in the observation and examination of the conduct of one individual. I say, this is indeed the case, because all the powers of the Godhead are employed upon the least as well as upon the greatest concerns of the universe ; and the whole mind and power of the Creator are as exclusively employed upon the formation of a grub as of a world. God knows everything perfectly, and he knows everything perfectly at once. This, to a human understanding, would breed confusion ; but there can be no confusion in the Divine understanding, because confusion arises from imperfection. Thus God, without confusion, beholds as distinctly the actions of every man, as if that man were the only created being, and the Godhead were solely employed in observing him. Let this thought fill your mind with awe and with remorse.—*Henry Kirke White, 1785—1806.*

*Verses 1—12.*—

O Lord, in me there lieth nought  
But to thy search revealed lies ;  
For when I sit  
Thou markest it ;  
No less thou notest when I rise ;  
Yea, closest closet of my thought  
Hath open windows to thine eyes.

Thou walkest with me when I walk,  
When to my bed for rest I go,  
I find thee there,  
And everywhere ;  
Not youngest thought in me doth grow,  
No, not one word I cast to talk  
But, yet unuttered, thou dost know.

If forth I march, thou goest before ;  
 If back I turn, thou com'st behind :  
     So forth nor back  
     Thy guard I lack ;  
 Nay, on me, too, thy hand I find.  
 Well, I thy wisdom may adore,  
 But never reach with earthy mind.

To shun thy notice, leave thine eye,  
 O whither might I take my way ?  
     To starry sphere ?  
     Thy throne is there.  
 To dead men's undelightsome stay ?  
 There is thy walk, and there to lie  
 Unknown, in vain I should assay.

O sun, whom light nor flight can match !  
 Suppose thy lightful flightful wings  
     Thou led to me,  
     And I could flee  
 As far as thee the evening brings :  
 Ev'n led to west he would me catch,  
 Nor should I lurk with western things.

Do thou thy best, O secret night,  
 In sable veil to cover me :  
     Thy sable veil  
     Shall vainly fail :  
 With day unmasked my night shall be ;  
 For night is day, and darkness light,  
 O Father of all lights, to thee.

*Sir Philip Sidney, 1554—1586.*

*Verse 2.*—"Thou." David makes the personal pronoun the very frontispiece of the verse, and so says expressly and distinctively to Jehovah, "*Thou knowest ;*" thus marking the difference between God and all others, as though he said, "Thou, and thou alone, O God, in all the universe, knowest altogether all that can be known concerning me, even to my inmost thought, as well as outward act."—*Martin Geier.*

*Verse 2.*—"Thou knowest my downsit<sup>ing</sup> and mine upris<sup>ing</sup>." Does God care ? Is he our Friend ? Even in such little matters as these, does he watch over us "to do us good" ? . . . When we "sit down" he sees ; when we rise up he is there. Not an action is lost or a thought overlooked. No wonder that, as these tiny miracles of care are related by David, he adds the words, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*" We get accustomed to the thought that God made the sun and sky, the "moon and stars which he hath ordained," and we bow to the fact that they are "the work of his fingers." Let us go further ! The "*coming in*" and "*going out*" of the Christian is mentioned several times in Scripture as though it were very important. So much hinges on these little words. "David went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways ; and the Lord was with him" : 1 Sam. xviii. 13, 14. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore" : Ps. cxxi. 8. David was given both *preservation* and *wisdom* in his "goings out" and "comings in." Perhaps the latter was both cause and effect of the first. It was needed, for many eyes were upon him, and many eyes are upon us : are they not ? Perhaps more than we think.—*Lady Hope, in "Between Times,"* 1884.

*Verse 2.*—"Downsit<sup>ing</sup> and upris<sup>ing</sup>." "*Upris<sup>ing</sup>*" following "*downsit<sup>ing</sup>*" is in the order of right sequence ; for action ought to follow meditation. Jacob saw the angels ascending to God before they descended to service among mortals. Hence we are taught first to join ourselves to God by meditation, and afterwards to repair to the aid of our fellows.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse 2.*—"Upris<sup>ing</sup>" may respect either rising *from bed*, when the Lord knows whether the heart is still with him (ver. 18) ; what sense is had of the Divine protection and sustentation, and what thankfulness there is for the mercies of the night past ; and whether the voice of prayer and praise is directed to him in the morning, as it should be (Ps. iii. 5 ; v. 3) ; or else rising *from the table*, when the Lord knows whether a man's table has been his snare, and with what thankfulness he rises from

it for the favours he has received. The Targum interprets this of rising up to go to war ; which David did, in the name and strength, and by the direction of the Lord.—*John Gill.*

Verse 2.—“*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*” “*My thought :*” that is, every thought, though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day. The divine knowledge reaches to their source and fountain, before they are our thoughts. If the Lord knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us ; he knows the tendency of them, where the bird will alight when it is in flight ; he knows them exactly ; he is therefore called a “*discerner*” or criticiser of the heart : Heb. iv. 2.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 2.—“*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*” Not that God is at a distance from our thoughts ; but he understands them while they are far off from us, from our knowledge, while they are potential, as gardeners know what weeds such ground will bring forth, when nothing appears. Deut. xxxi. 21. “*I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear :*” God knew their thoughts before they came into Canaan, what they would be there. And how can it be, but that God should know all our thoughts, seeing he made the heart, and it is in his hand (Prov. xxi. 1), seeing, “*we live, and move, and have our being*” in God (Acts xvii. 28) ; seeing he is through us all, and in us all (Eph. iv. 6). Look well to your hearts, thoughts, risings, whatever comes into your mind ; let no secret sins, or corruptions, lodge there ; think not to conceal anything from the eye of God.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 2.—“*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*” Though my thoughts be never so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice that I myself cannot.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—“*My thought.*” The *ῥ, rea*, which we have rendered “*thought,*” signifies also a *friend* or *companion*, on which account some read—*thou knowest what is nearest me afar off*, a meaning more to the point than any other, if it could be supported by example. The reference would then be very appropriately to the fact that the most distant objects are contemplated as near by God. Some for “*afar off*” read *beforehand*, in which signification the Hebrew word is elsewhere taken ; as if he had said, O Lord, every thought which I conceive in my heart is already known to thee beforehand.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—“*Thought.*” In all affliction, in all business, a man’s best comfort is this, that all he does and even all he thinks, God knows. In the Septuagint we read *διαλογισμοῖς*, that is, “*reasonings.*” God knows all our inner ratiocination, all the dialogues, all the colloquies of the soul with itself.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—“*Thou understandest my thought.*” Before men we stand as opaque bee-hives. They can see the thoughts go in and out of us, but what work they do inside of a man they cannot tell. Before God we are as glass bee-hives, and all that our thoughts are doing within us he perfectly sees and understands.—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

Verse 2.—“*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*”

Man may not see thee do an impious deed ;  
But God thy very inmost thought can read.”

*Plutarch.*

Verse 2.—“*Afar off.*” This expression is, as in Ps. cxxxviii. 6, to be understood as contradicting the delusion (Job xxii. 12—14) that God’s dwelling in heaven prevents him from observing mundane things.—*Lange’s Commentary.*

Verse 2.—“*Afar off.*” Both in distance, however far off a man may seek to hide his thoughts from God ; and in time, for God knows the human thought before man conceives it in his heart, in his eternal prescience. The Egyptians called God the “*eye of the world.*”—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 2—4.—Do not fancy that your demeanour, posture, dress, or deportment are not under God’s providence. You deceive yourself. Do not think that your thoughts pass free from inspection. The Lord understands them afar off. Think not that your words are dissipated in the air before God can hear. Oh, no ! He knows them even when still upon your tongue. Do not think that your ways are so private and concealed that there is none to know or censure them. You mistake. God knows all your ways.—*Johann David Frisch, 1731.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou compassest my path and my lying down,*” etc. The words that I have read unto you, seem to be a metaphor, taken from soldiers surrounding the ways with an ambush, or placing scouts and spies in every corner, to discover the enemy in his march; “*Thou compassest my path*”: thou hast (as it were) thy spies over me, wheresoever I go. By “*path*” is meant the outward actions and carriage of his ordinary conversation. By “*lying down*” is signified to us the private and close actions of his life; such as were attended only by darkness and solitude. In Ps. xxxvi. verse 4, it is said of the wicked that “he deviseth mischief upon his bed,” to denote not only his perverse diligence, but also his secrecy in it: and God is said to “hide his children in the secret of his pavilion,” so that these places of rest and lying down are designed for secrecy and withdrawing. When a man retires into his chamber, he does in a manner, for a while, shut himself out of the world. And that this is the fine sense of that expression of *lying down* appears from the next words, “*Thou art acquainted with all my ways*”; where he collects in one word what he had before said in two; or, it may come in by way of entrance and deduction, from the former. As if he should say, Thou knowest what I do in my ordinary converse with men, and also how I behave myself when I am retired from them; therefore thou knowest *all my actions*, since a man’s actions may be reduced either to his public or private deportment. By the other expression of “*my ways*” is here meant the total of a man’s behaviour before God, whether in thoughts, words, or deeds, as is manifest by comparing this with other verses.—*Robert South.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou compassest my path.*” This is a metaphor either from huntsmen watching all the motions and lurking-places of wild beasts, that they may catch them; or from soldiers besieging their enemies in a city, and setting round about them.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou compassest,*” or *fannest*, or *winnowest*, “*my path*”; that is, discussest or triest out to the utmost, even tracing the footsteps, as the Greek signifieth. Compare Job xxxi. 4.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou art acquainted with all my ways.*” God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step. He knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk toward, what company we walk with.—*Religious Tract Society’s Commentary.*

Verse 3.—“*Art acquainted,*” as by most familiar intercourse, as if thou hadst always lived with me [Hebrew] and thus become entirely familiar with my ways.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 3.—The Psalmist mentions four modes of human existence; *stationis*, *sessionis*, *itionis*, *cubationis*; because man never stayeth long in one mood, but in every change the eyes of the Lord cease not to watch him.—*Geier.*

Verse 4.—“*For there is not a word in my tongue,*” etc. The words admit a double meaning. Accordingly some understand them to imply that God knows what we are about to say before the words are formed on our tongue; others, that though we speak not a word, and try by silence to conceal our secret intentions, we cannot elude his notice. Either rendering amounts to the same thing, and it is of no consequence which we adopt. The idea meant to be conveyed is, that while the tongue is the index of thought to man, being the great medium of communication, God, who knows the heart, is independent of words. And use is made of the demonstrative particle *lo!* to indicate emphatically that the innermost recesses of our spirit stand present to his view.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—“*For there is not a word in my tongue,*” etc. How needful it is to set a watch before the doors of our mouth, to hold that unruly member of ours, the tongue, as with bit and bridle. Some of you feel at times that you can scarcely say a word, and the less you say the better. Well, it may be as well; for great talkers are almost sure to make slips with their tongue. It may be a good thing that you cannot speak much; for in the multitude of words there lacketh not sin. Wherever you go, what light, vain, and foolish conversations you hear! I am glad not to be thrown into circumstances where I can hear it. But with you it may be different. You may often repent of speaking, you will rarely repent of silence. How soon angry words are spoken! How soon foolish expressions drop from the mouth! The Lord knows it all, marks it all, and did you carry about with you a more solemn recollection of it you would be more watchful than you are.—*Joseph C. Philpot.*

Verse 4.—“When there is not a word in my tongue, O LORD, thou knowest all ;” so some read it ; for thoughts are words to God.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 4.—“*Thou knowest it.*” The gods know what passes in our minds without the aid of eyes, ears, or tongues ; on which divine omniscience is founded the feeling of men that, when they wish in silence, or offer up a prayer for anything, the gods hear them.—*Cicero*.

Verse 5.—“*Thou hast beset me behind and before,*” etc. There is here an insensible transition from God’s omniscience to his omnipresence, out of which the Scriptures represent it as arising. “*Behind and before,*” i.e. on all sides. The idea of *above* and *below* is suggested by the last clause. “*Beset,*” besiege, hem in, or closely surround. “*Thy hand,*” or the palm of thy hand, as the Hebrew word strictly denotes.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 5.—“*Thou hast beset me behind and before.*” What would you say if, wherever you turned, whatever you were doing, whatever thinking, whether in public or private, with a confidential friend telling your secrets, or alone planning them—if, I say, you saw an eye constantly fixed on you, from whose watching, though you strove ever so much, you could never escape. . . . that could perceive your every thought ? The supposition is awful enough. There is such an Eye.—*De Vere*.

Verse 5.—“*Thou hast beset me behind and before.*” One who finds the way blocked up turns back ; but David found himself hedged in *behind* as well as *before*.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 5.—“*Thou hast . . . laid thine hand upon me.*” As by an arrest ; so that I am thy prisoner, and cannot stir a foot from thee.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 5.—“*And laid thine hand upon me.*” To make of me one acceptable to thyself. To rule me, to lead me, to uphold me, to protect me ; to restore me ; in my growth, in my walk, in my failures, in my affliction, in my despair.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 6.—“*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,*” etc. When we are about to look upon God’s perfections, we should observe our own imperfections, and thereby learn to be the more modest in our searching of God’s unsearchable perfection : “*Such knowledge,*” saith David, “*is too high for me, I cannot attain unto it.*” Then do we see most of God, when we see him incomprehensible, and do see ourselves swallowed up in the thoughts of his perfection, and are forced to fall in admiration of God, as here. “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*”—*David Dickson*.

Verse 6.—“*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.*” Compared with our stunted knowledge, how amazing is the knowledge of God ! As he made all things, he must be intimately acquainted, not only with their properties, but with their every essence. His eye, at the same instant, surveys all the works of his immeasurable creation. He observes, not only the complicated system of the universe, but the slightest motion of the most microscopic insect ;—not only the sublimest conception of angels, but the meanest propensity of the most worthless of his creatures. At this moment he is listening to the praises breathed by grateful hearts in distant worlds, and reading every grovelling thought which passes through the polluted minds of the fallen race of Adam. . . . At one view, he surveys the past, the present, and the future. No inattention prevents him from observing ; no defect of memory or of judgment obscures his comprehension. In his remembrance are stored not only the transactions of this world, but of all the worlds in the universe ; not only the events of the six thousand years which have passed since the earth was created, but of a duration without beginning. Nay, things to come, extending to a duration without end, are also before him. An eternity past and an eternity to come are, at the same moment, in his eye ; and with that eternal eye he surveys infinity. How amazing ! How inconceivable !—*Henry Duncan* (1774—1846), in “*Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons.*”

Verse 6.—“*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.*” There is a mystery about the Divine Omnipresence, which we do not learn to solve, after years of meditation. As God is a simple spirit, without dimensions, parts, or susceptibility of division, he is equally, that is, fully, present at all times in all places. At any given moment he is not present partly here and partly in the utmost skirt of the furthest system which revolves about the dimmest telescopic star, as if like a galaxy of perfection he stretched a sublime magnificence through universal space, which admitted of



separation and partition; but he is present, with the totality of his glorious properties in every point of space. This results undeniably from the simple spirituality of the Great Supreme. All that God is in one place he is in all places. All there is of God is in every place. Indeed, his presence has no dependence on space or matter. His attribute of essential presence were the same if universal matter were blotted out. Only by a figure can God be said to be in the universe; for the universe is comprehended by him. All the boundless glory of the Godhead is essentially present at every spot in his creation, however various may be the manifestations of this glory at different times and places.

Here we have a case which ought to instruct and sober those, who, in their shallow philosophy, demand a religion without mystery. It would be a religion without God; for "who by searching can find out God?"—*James W. Alexander*, in "*The [American] National Preacher*," 1860.

*Verse 7.*—"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" By the "*spirit of God*" we are not here, as in several other parts of Scripture, to conceive of his power merely, but his understanding and knowledge. In man the spirit is the seat of intelligence, and so it is here in reference to God, as is plain from the second part of the sentence, where by "*the face of God*" is meant his knowledge or inspection.—*John Calvin*.

*Verse 7.*—"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" That is, either from thee, who art a spirit, and so canst pierce and penetrate me; be as truly and essentially in the very bowels and marrow of my soul, as my soul is intimately and essentially in my body: "*from thy spirit*;" that is, from thy knowledge and thy power; thy knowledge to detect and observe me, thy power to uphold or crush me.—*Ezekiel Hopkins*, 1633—1690.

*Verse 7.*—We may elude the vigilance of a human enemy and place ourselves beyond his reach. God fills all space—there is not a spot in which his piercing eye is not on us, and his uplifted hand cannot find us out. Man must strike soon if he would strike at all; for opportunities pass away from him, and his victim may escape his vengeance by death. There is no passing of opportunity with God, and it is this which makes his longsuffering a solemn thing. God can wait, for he has a whole eternity before him in which he may strike. "All things are open and naked to him with whom we have to do."—*Frederick William Robertson*, 1816—1853.

*Verse 7.*—"Whither shall I go," etc. A heathen philosopher once asked, "Where is God?" The Christian answered, "Let me first ask you, Where is he not?"—*John Arrowsmith*, 1602—1659.

*Verse 7.*—"Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" That exile would be strange that could separate us from God. I speak not of those poor and common comforts, that in all lands and coasts it is his sun that shines, his elements of earth or water that bear us, his air we breathe; but of that special privilege, that his gracious presence is ever with us; that no sea is so broad as to divide us from his favour; that wheresoever we feed, he is our host; wheresoever we rest, the wings of his blessed providence are stretched over us. Let my soul be sure of this, though the whole world be traitors to me.—*Thomas Adams*.

*Verse 7.*—"Whither shall I flee?" etc. Surely no whither: they that attempt it, do but as the fish which swimmeth to the length of the line, with a hook in the mouth.—*John Trapp*.

*Verse 7.*—"Thy presence." The presence of God's glory is in heaven; the presence of his power on earth; the presence of his justice in hell; and the presence of his grace with his people. If he deny us his powerful presence, we fall into nothing; if he deny us his gracious presence, we fall into sin; if he deny us his merciful presence, we fall into hell.—*John Mason*.

*Verse 7.*—"Thy presence." The celebrated Linnæus testified in his conversation, writings, and actions, the greatest sense of God's presence. So strongly indeed was he impressed with the idea, that he wrote over the door of his library: "*Innocuè vivite, Numen adest—Live innocently: God is present.*"—*George Seaton Bowes*, in "*Information and Illustration*," 1884.

*Verses 7—11.*—You will never be neglected by the Deity, though you were so small as to sink into the depths of the earth, or so lofty as to fly up to heaven; but you will suffer from the gods the punishment due to you, whether you abide here, or depart to Hades, or are carried to a place still more wild than these.—*Plato*.

Verses 7—12.—The Psalm was not written by a Pantheist. The Psalmist speaks of God as a Person everywhere present in creation, yet distinct from creation. In these verses he says, "*Thy spirit . . . thy presence . . . thou art there . . . thy hand . . . thy right hand . . . darkness hideth not from thee.*" God is everywhere, but he is not everything.—William Jones, in "*A Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms,*" 1879.

Verse 8.—"*If I make my bed.*" Properly, "If I strew or spread my couch." If I should seek that as a place to lie down.—Albert Barnes.

Verse 8.—"*Hell*" in some places in Scripture signifies the lower parts of the earth, without relation to punishment: "*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*" By "*heaven*" he means the upper region of the world, without any respect to the state of blessedness; and "*hell*" is the most opposite and remote in distance, without respect to misery. As if he had said, Let me go whither I will, thy presence finds me out.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 8.—"*Thou art there.*" Or, more emphatically and impressively in the original, "*Thou!*" That is, the Psalmist imagines himself in the highest heaven, or in the deepest abodes of the dead,—and lo! God is there also; he has not gone from him! he is still in the presence of the same God!—Albert Barnes.

Verse 8.—"*Thou art there.*" This is not meant of his knowledge, for that the Psalmist had spoken of before: verses 2, 3, "Thou understandest my thought afar off: thou art acquainted with all my ways." Besides, "*thou art there*" not thy wisdom or knowledge, but *thou*, thy essence, not only thy virtue. For having before spoken of his omniscience, he proves that such knowledge could not be in God unless he were present in his essence in all places, so as to be excluded from none. He fills the depths of hell, the extension of the earth, and the heights of the heavens. When the Scripture mentions the power of God only, it expresseth it by hand or arm; but when it mentions the spirit of God, and doth not intend the third person of the Trinity, it signifies the nature and essence of God; and so here, when he saith, "*Whither shall I go from thy spirit?*" he adds exegetically, "*whither shall I flee from thy presence?*" or Hebrew, "*face*"; and the face of God in Scripture signifies the essence of God: Exod. xxxiii. 20, 23, "Thou canst not see my face," and "my face shall not be seen"; the effects of his power, wisdom, providence, are seen, which are his back-parts, but not his face. The effects of his power and wisdom are seen in the world, but his essence is invisible, and this the Psalmist elegantly expresseth.—Stephen Charnock.

Verse 9.—"*The wings of the morning,*" is an elegant metaphor; and by them we may conjecture is meant the sunbeams, called "*wings*" because of their swift and speedy motion, making their passage so sudden and instantaneous, as that they do prevent the observation of the eye; called "*the wings of the morning*" because the dawn of the morning comes flying in upon these wings of the sun, and brings light along with it; and, by beating and fanning of these wings, scatters the darkness before it. "Now," saith the Psalmist, "if I could pluck these wings of the morning," the sunbeams, if I could imp [graft] my own shoulders with them, if I should fly as far and as swift as light, even in an instant, to the uttermost parts of the sea; yea, if in my flight I should spy out some solitary rock, so formidable and dismal as if we might almost call in question whether ever a Providence had been there, if I could pitch there on the top of it, where never anything had made its abode, but coldness, thunders, and tempests; yet there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—Ezekiel Hopkins.

Verse 9.—"*The wings of the morning.*" This figure to a Western is not a little obscure. For my part, I cannot doubt that we are to understand certain beautiful light clouds as thus poetically described. I have observed invariably, that in the late spring-time, in summer, and yet more especially in the autumn, white clouds are to be seen in Palestine. They only occur at the earliest hours of morning, just previous to and at the time of sunrise. It is the total absence of clouds at all other parts of the day, except during the short period of the winter rains, that lends such striking solemnity and force to those descriptions of the Second Advent where our Lord is represented as coming in the clouds. This feature of his majesty loses all its meaning in lands like ours, in which clouds are of such common occurrence that they are rarely absent from the sky. The morning clouds of summer and autumn are always of a brilliant silvery white, save at such times as they are

dyed with the delicate opal tints of dawn. They hang low upon the mountains of Judah, and produce effects of undescribable beauty, as they float far down in the valleys, or rise to wrap themselves around the summit of the hills. In almost every instance, by about seven o'clock the heat has dissipated these fleecy clouds, and to the vivid Eastern imagination morn has folded her outstretched wings.—*James Neil.*

*Verse 9.*—“*If I take the wings of the morning.*” The point of comparison appears to be the incalculable velocity of light.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verses 9, 10.*—When we think that we fly from God, in running out of one place into another, we do but run from one hand to the other; for there is no place where God is not, and whithersoever a rebellious sinner doth run, the hand of God will meet with him to cross him, and hinder his hoped-for good success, although he securely prophesieth never so much good unto himself in his journey. What! had Jonah offended the winds or the waters, that they bear him such enmity? The winds and the waters and all God's creatures are wont to take God's part against Jonah, or any rebellious sinner. For though God in the beginning gave power to man over all creatures to rule them, yet when man sins, God giveth power and strength to his creatures to rule and bridle man. Therefore even he that now was lord over the waters, now the waters are lord over him.—*Henry Smith.*

*Verses 9, 10.*—

Should fate command me to the farthest verge  
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,  
Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun  
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam  
Flames on the Atlantic isles; 'tis nought to me:  
Since God is ever present, ever felt,  
In the void waste as in the city full;  
And where he vital breathes, there must be joy,  
When e'en at last the solemn hour shall come,  
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,  
I cheerful will obey; there with new powers,  
Will rising wonders sing; I cannot go  
Where universal love smiles not around,  
Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons:  
From seeming evil still deducing good,  
And better thence again, and better still,  
In infinite progression.

*James Thomson, 1700—1748.*

*Verse 11.*—“*If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me,*” etc. The foulest enormities of human conduct have always striven to cover themselves with the shroud of night. The thief, the counterfeiter, the assassin, the robber, the murderer, and the seducer, feel comparatively safe in the midnight darkness, because no human eye can scrutinize their actions. But what if it should turn out that sable night, to speak paradoxically, is an unerring photographer! What if wicked men, as they open their eyes from the sleep of death, in another world, should find the universe hung round with faithful pictures of their earthly enormities, which they had supposed for ever lost in the oblivion of night! What scenes for them to gaze at for ever! They may now, indeed, smile incredulously at such a suggestion; but the disclosures of chemistry may well make them tremble. Analogy does make it a scientific probability that every action of man, however deep the darkness in which it was performed, has imprinted its image on nature, and that there may be tests which shall draw it into daylight, and make it permanent so long as materialism endures.—*Edward Hitchcock, in “The Religion of Geology,” 1851.*

*Verse 12.*—“*The darkness hideth not from thee.*” Though the place where we sin be to men as dark as Egypt, yet to God it is as light as Goshen.—*William Secker.*

*Verse 13.*—“*Thou hast possessed my reins.*” From the sensitiveness to pain of this part of the body, it was regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of sensation and feeling, as also of desire and longing (Ps. lxxii. 21; Job xvi. 13; xix. 27). It is sometimes used of the inner nature generally (Ps. xvi. 7; Jer. xx. 12), and specially of the judgment or direction of reason (Jer. xi. 20; xii. 2).—*William Lindsay Alexander, in Kitto's Cyclopædia.*

*Verse 13.*—"Thou hast possessed my reins." The reins are made specially prominent in order to mark them, the seat of the tenderest, most secret emotions, as the work of him who trieth the heart and the reins.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse 13.*—"Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb." The word here rendered *cover* means properly to interweave; to weave; to knit together, and the literal translation would be, "Thou hast woven me in my mother's womb," meaning that God had put his parts together, as one who weaves cloth, or who makes a basket. So it is rendered by De Wette and by Gesenius (*Lex.*). The original word has however, also the idea of protecting, as in a booth or hut, woven or knit together, —to wit, of boughs and branches. The former signification best suits the connection; and then the sense would be, that as God had made him—as he had formed his members, and united them in a bodily frame and form before he was born—he must be able to understand all his thoughts and feelings. As he was not concealed from God before he saw the light, so he could not be anywhere.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse 14.*—"I will praise thee," etc. All God's works are admirable, man wonderfully wonderful. "Marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." What infers he on all this? Therefore "I will praise thee." If we will not praise him that made us, will he not repent that he made us? Oh that we knew what the saints do in heaven, and how the sweetness of that doth swallow up all earthly pleasures! They sing honour and glory to the Lord. Why? Because he hath created all things: Rev. iv. 11. When we behold an exquisite piece of work, we presently enquire after him that made it, purposely to commend his skill: and there is no greater disgrace to an artist, than having perfected a famous work, to find it neglected, no man minding it, or so much as casting an eye upon it. All the works of God are considerable, and man is bound to this contemplation. "When I consider the heavens," etc., I say, "What is man?" Ps. viii. 3, 4. He admires the heavens, but his admiration reflects upon man. *Quis homo?* There is no workman but would have his instruments used, and used to that purpose for which they were made. . . . Man is set like a little world in the midst of the great, to glorify God; this is the scope and end of his creation.—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verse 14.*—"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The term "*fearful*" is sometimes to be taken subjectively, for our being possessed of fear. In this sense it signifies the same as timid. Thus the prophet was directed to say to them that were of a "*fearful heart, be strong.*" At other times it is taken objectively, for that property in an object the contemplation of which excites fear in the beholder. Thus it is said of God that he is "*fearful in praises,*" and that it is "*a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" In this sense it is manifestly to be understood in the passage now under consideration. The human frame is so admirably constructed, so delicately combined, and so much in danger of being dissolved by innumerable causes, that the more we think of it the more we tremble, and wonder at our own continued existence.

"How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful is man!  
How passing wonder he who made him such,  
Who mingled in our make such strange extremes  
Of different natures, marvellously mixed!  
Helpless immortal, insect infinite,  
A worm, a god—I tremble at myself!"

To do justice to the subject, it would be necessary to be well acquainted with anatomy. I have no doubt that a thorough examination of that "substance which God hath curiously wrought" (verse 15), would furnish abundant evidence of the justness of the Psalmist's words; but even those things which are manifest to common observation may be sufficient for this purpose. In general it is observable that the human frame abounds with avenues at which enter every thing conducive to preservation and comfort, and every thing that can excite alarm. Perhaps there is not one of these avenues but what may become an inlet to death, nor one of the blessings of life but what may be the means of accomplishing it. We live by inhalation, but we also die by it. Diseases and death in innumerable forms are conveyed by the very air we breathe. God hath given us a relish for divers

aliments, and rendered them necessary to our subsistence: yet, from the abuse of them, what a train of disorders and premature deaths are found amongst men! And, when there is no abuse, a single delicious morsel may, by the evil design of another, or even by mere accident, convey poison through all our veins, and in one hour reduce the most athletic form to a corpse.

The elements of fire and water, without which we could not subsist, contain properties which in a few moments would be able to destroy us; nor can the utmost circumspection at all times preserve us from their destructive power. A single stroke on the head may divest us of reason or of life. A wound or a bruise of the spine may instantly deprive the lower extremities of all sensation. If the vital parts be injured, so as to suspend the performance of their mysterious functions, how soon is the constitution broken up! By means of the circulation of the blood, how easily and suddenly are deadly substances diffused throughout the frame! The putridity of a morbid subject has been imparted to the very hand stretched out to save it. The poisoned arrow, the envenomed fang, the hydrophobic saliva, derive from hence their fearful efficacy. Even the pores of the skin, necessary as they are to life, may be the means of death. Not only are poisonous substances hereby admitted, but, when obstructed by surrounding damps, the noxious humours of the body, instead of being emitted, are retained in the system, and become productive of numerous diseases, always afflictive, and often fatal to life.

Instead of wondering at the number of premature deaths that are constantly witnessed, there is far greater reason to wonder that there are no more, and that any of us survive to seventy or eighty years of age.

" Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one be gone:  
Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long."

Nor is this all. If we are "*fearfully made*" as to our animal frame, it will be found that we are much more so considered as moral and accountable beings. In what relates to our animal nature, we are in most instances constructed like other animals; but, in what relates to us as moral agents, we stand distinguished from all the lower creation. We are made for eternity. The present life is only the introductory part of our existence. It is that, however, which stamps a character on all that follows. How fearful is our situation! What innumerable influences is the mind exposed to from the temptations which surround us! Not more dangerous to the body is the pestilence that walketh in darkness than these are to the soul. Such is the construction of our nature that the very word of life, if heard without regard, becomes a savour of death unto death. What consequences hang upon the small and apparently trifling beginning of evils! A wicked thought may issue in a wicked purpose, this purpose in a wicked action, this action in a course of conduct, this course may draw into its vortex millions of our fellow-creatures, and terminate in perdition, both to ourselves and them. The whole of this process was exemplified in the case of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. When placed over the ten tribes, he first *said in his heart*, "If this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, their hearts will turn to Rehoboam; and thus shall the kingdom return to the house of David." 1 Kings xii. 26—30. On this he took counsel, and made the calves of Dan and Bethel. This engaged him in a course of wickedness, from which no remonstrances could reclaim him. Nor was it confined to himself; for he "*made all Israel to sin.*" The issue was, not only their destruction as a nation, but, to all appearance, the eternal ruin of himself, and great numbers of his followers. Such were the fruits of an evil thought!

Oh, my soul, tremble at thyself! Tremble at the fearfulness of thy situation; and commit thine immortal all into his hands "who is able to keep thee from falling, and to present thee faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 14.—"*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" Never was so terse and expressive a description of the physical conformation of man given by any human being. So "*fearfully*" are we made, that there is not an action or gesture of our bodies, which does not, apparently, endanger some muscle, vein, or sinew, the rupture of which would destroy either life or health. We are so "*wonderfully*" made, that our organization infinitely surpasses, in skill, contrivance, design, and adaptation of means to ends, the most curious and complicated piece of mechanism,

not only ever executed "by art and man's device," but ever conceived by human imagination.—*Richard Warner, 1828.*

*Verse 14.*—"I am wonderfully made." Take notice of the curious frame of the body. David saith, "I am wonderfully made"; *acu pictus sum*, so the Vulgate rendereth it, "painted as with a needle," like a garment of needlework, of divers colours, richly embroidered with nerves and veins. What shall I speak of the eye, wherein there is such curious workmanship, that many upon the first sight of it have been driven to acknowledge God? Of the hand made to open and shut, and to serve the labours and ministries of nature without wasting and decay for many years? If they should be of marble or iron, with such constant use they would soon wear out; and yet now they are of flesh they last so long as life lasteth. Of the head? fitly placed to be the seat of the senses, to command and direct the rest of the members. Of the lungs? a frail piece of flesh, yet, though in continual action, of a long use. It were easy to enlarge upon this occasion; but I am to preach a sermon, not to read an anatomy lecture. In short, therefore, every part is so placed and framed, as if God had employed his whole wisdom about it.

But as yet we have spoken but of the casket wherein the jewel lieth. The soul, that divine spark of blast, how quick, nimble, various, and indefatigable in its motions! how comprehensive in its capacities! how it animateth the body, and is like God himself, all in every part! Who can trace the flights of reason? What a value hath God set upon the soul! He made it after his image, he redeemed it with Christ's blood.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verse 14.*—What is meant by saying that the soul is *in* the body, any more than saying that a thought or a hope is in a stone or a tree? *How* is it joined to the body? what keeps it one with the body? what keeps it in the body? what prevents it any moment from separating from the body? When two things which we see are united, they are united by some connexion which we can understand. A chain or cable keeps a ship in its place; we lay the foundation of a building in the earth, and the building endures. But what is it which unites soul and body? how do they touch? how do they keep together? how is it we do not wander to the stars or the depths of the sea, or to and fro as chance may carry us, while our body remains where it was on earth? So far from its being wonderful that the body one day dies, how is it that it is made to live and move at all? how is it that it keeps from dying a single hour? Certainly it is as uncomprehensible as anything can be, how soul and body can make up one man; and, unless we had the instance before our eyes, we should seem in saying so to be using words without meaning. For instance, would it not be extravagant and idle to speak of time as deep or high, or of space as quick or slow? Not less idle, surely, it perhaps seems to some races of spirits to say that thought and mind have a body, which in the case of man they have, according to God's marvellous will.—*John Henry Newman, in Parochial Sermons, 1839.*

*Verse 14.*—Moses describes the creation of man (Gen. ii. 7): "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Now what God did then immediately, he doth still by means. Do not think that God made man at first, and that ever since men have made one another. No (saith Job), "he that made me in the womb made him:" ch. xxxi. 15. David will inform us: "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works,*" etc. As if he had said, Lord, I am wonderfully made, and thou hast made me. I am a part or parcel of thy marvellous works, yea, the breviate or compendium of them all. The frame of the body (much more the frame of the soul, most of all the frame of the new creature in the soul) is God's work, and it is a wonderful work of God. And therefore David could not satisfy himself in the bare affirmation of this, but enlargeth in the explication of it in verses 15 and 16. David took no notice of father or mother, but ascribed the whole efficiency of himself to God. And indeed David was as much made by God as Adam; and so is every son of Adam. Though we are begotten and born of our earthly parents, yet God is the chief parent and the only fashioner of us all. Thus graciously spake Jacob to his brother Esau, demanding, "Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant": Gen. xxxiii. 5. Therefore, as the Spirit of God warns, "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. c. 3); which as it is true especially of our spiritual making, so 'tis true also of our natural.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 14.*—Those who were skilful in Anatomy among the ancients, concluded, from the outward and inward make of a human body, that it was the work of a Being transcendently wise and powerful. As the world grew more enlightened in this art, their discoveries gave them fresh opportunities of admiring the conduct of Providence in the formation of a human body. Galen was converted by his dissections, and could not but own a Supreme Being upon a survey of this his handiwork. There are, indeed, many parts, of which the old anatomists did not know the certain use; but as they saw that most of those which they examined were adapted with admirable art to their several functions, they did not question but those whose uses they could not determine, were contrived with the same wisdom for respective ends and purposes. Since the circulation of the blood has been found out, and many other great discoveries have been made by our modern anatomists, we see new wonders in the human frame, and discern several important uses for those parts, which uses the ancients knew nothing of. In short, the body of man is such a subject as stands the utmost test of examination. Though it appears formed with the nicest wisdom upon the most superficial survey of it, it still mends upon the search, and produces our surprise and amazement in proportion as we pry into it.—*The Spectator.*

*Verses 14—16.*—The subject, from the 14th verse to the 16th inclusive, might have been much more particularly illustrated; but we are taught, by the peculiar delicacy of expression in the Sacred Writings, to avoid, as in this case, the entering too minutely into *anatomical* details.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 15.*—“*My substance was not hid from thee,*” etc. What deeper solitude, what state of concealment more complete, than that of the babe as yet unborn? Yet the Psalmist represents the Almighty as present even there. “*My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*” The whole image and train of thought is one of striking beauty. We see the wonderful work of the human body, with all its complex tissue of bones, and joints, and nerves, and veins, and arteries growing up, and fashioned, as it had been a piece of rich and curious embroidery under the hand of the manufacturer. But it is not the work itself that we are now called on to admire. The contexture is indeed fearful and wonderful; but how much more when we reflect that the divine Artificer wrought within the dark and narrow confines of the womb. Surely the darkness is no darkness with him who could thus work. Surely the blackest night, the closest and most artificial recess, the subtlest disguises and hypocrisies are all seen through, are all naked and bare before him whose “*eyes did see our substance yet being imperfect.*” The night is as clear as the day; and secret sins are set in the light of his countenance, no less than those which are open and scandalous, committed before the sun or on the house-top. And if “in his book all our members are written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them,” surely the actions of these members, now that they are grown, or growing, to maturity, and called upon to fulfil the functions for which they were created, shall be all noted down; and none be contrived so secretly, but that when the books are opened at the last day, it shall be found written therein to justify or to condemn us. Such is the main lesson which David himself would teach us in this Psalm,—the *omnipresence* and *omniscience* of Almighty God. My brethren, let us reflect for a little upon this deep mystery; that he, “the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; that go whither we will he is there; that say what we will, there is not a word on our tongue but he knoweth it altogether. The reflection is, indeed, mysterious, but it is also most profitable.—*Charles Wordsworth, in “Christian Boyhood,”* 1846.

*Verse 15.*—“*My substance was not hid from thee.*” Should an artizan intend commencing a work in some dark cave where there was no light to assist him, how would he set his hand to it? in what way would he proceed? and what kind of workmanship would it prove? But God makes the most perfect work of all in the dark, for he fashions man in the mother’s womb.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 15.*—“*When I was made in secret,*” etc. The author uses a metaphor derived from the most subtle art of the Phrygian workman :

“When I was formed in the secret place,  
When I was wrought with a needle in the depths of the earth.

Whoever observes this (in truth he will not be able to observe it in the common translations), and at the same time reflects upon the wonderful mechanism of the human body ; the various implications of the veins, arteries, fibres, and membranes; the "undescribable texture" of the whole fabric—may, indeed, feel the beauty and gracefulness of this well-adapted metaphor, but will miss much of its force and sublimity, unless he be apprised that the art of designing in needlework was wholly dedicated to the use of the sanctuary, and, by a direct precept of the divine law, chiefly employed in furnishing a part of the sacerdotal habit, and the vails for the entrance of the Tabernacle. Exod. xxviii. 39; xxvi. 36; xxvii. 16. Thus the poet compares the wisdom of the divine Artificer with the most estimable of human arts—that art which was dignified by being consecrated altogether to the use of religion; and the workmanship of which was so exquisite, that even the sacred writings seem to attribute it to a supernatural guidance. See Exod. xxxv. 30—35.—Robert Lowth (1710—1787), in "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews."

Verse 15.—"Curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," that is, in the womb: as curious workmen, when they have some choice piece in hand, they perfect it in private, and then bring it forth to light for men to gaze at. What a wonderful piece of work is man's head (God's masterpiece in this little world), the chief seat of the soul, that *cura Divini ingenii*, as Favorinus calls it. Many locks and keys argue the value of the jewel that they keep, and many papers wrapping the token within them, the price of the token. The tables of the testament, first laid up in the ark, secondly, the ark bound about with pure gold; thirdly, overshadowed with cherubim's wings; fourthly, enclosed within the veil of the Tabernacle; fifthly, with the compass of the Tabernacle; sixthly, with a court about all; seventhly, with a treble covering of goats' rams', and badgers' skins above all; they must needs be precious tables. So when the Almighty made man's head (the seat of the reasonable soul) and overlaid it with hair, skin, and flesh, like the threefold covering of the Tabernacle, and encompassed it with a skull and bones like boards of cedar, and afterwards with divers skins like silken curtains; and lastly, enclosed it with the yellow skin that covers the brain (like the purple veil), he would doubtless have us to know it was made for some great treasure to be put therein. How and when the reasonable soul is put into this curious cabinet philosophers dispute many things, but can affirm nothing of certainty.—Abraham Wright.

Verse 15.—"In the lowest parts of the earth." From this remarkable expression which, in the original, and as elsewhere used, denotes the region of the dead—*Sheol*, or *Hades*—it would appear that it is not only his formation in the womb the Psalmist here contemplates, but also—regarding the region of the dead as the womb of resurrection life—the refashioning of the body hereafter, and its new birth to the life immortal, which will be no less "marvellous" a work, but rather more so, than the first fashioning of man's "substance." Confirmed by the words of verse 18—"When I awake, I am still with thee"—the same language before employed to express the resurrection hope, Ps. xvii. 15: when there shall be a further illustration of God's mindfulness of his purposes and "precious counsels" with respect to his redeemed, in anticipation of which they may repeat this Psalm with renewed feelings of wonder and admiration.—William De Burgh.

Verses 15, 16.—The word "substance" represents different words in these verses. In verse 15 it is "my strength," or "my bones;" in verse 16 the word is usually rendered "embryo": but "clew" (life a ball yet to be unwound) finds favour with great scholars.

"In the lowest parts of the earth" denotes no subterranean limbo or workshop; but is a poetical parallel to "in secret."

"Which in continuance were fashioned" is wrong. The margin, though also wrong, indicates the right way: "my days were determined before one of them was."—David M'Laren, in "The Book of Psalms in Metre," 1883.

Verse 16.—"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect," etc. From whence we may learn, first, not to be proud of what we are; all's the work of God. How beautiful or comely, how wise or holy soever you are, 'tis not of yourselves. What hath any man, either in naturals or supernaturals, which he hath not received? Secondly, despise not what others are or have, though they are not such exact pieces, though they have not such excellent endowments as yourselves; yet they



are what God hath made them. Thirdly, despise not what yourselves are. Many are ashamed to be seen as God made them; few are ashamed to be seen what the devil hath made them. Many are troubled at small defects in the outward man; few are troubled at the greatest deformities of the inward man: many buy artificial beauty to supply the natural; few spiritual, to supply the defects of the supernatural beauty of the soul.—*Abraham Wright.*

*Verse 16.*—"My substance yet being unperfect." One word in the original, which means strictly anything rolled together as a ball, and hence is generally supposed to mean here the foetus or embryo. Hupfeld, however, prefers to understand it of the ball of life, as consisting of a number of different threads ("the days" of verse 16—see margin) which are first a compact mass as it were, and which are then unwound as life runs on.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse 16.*—A skillful architect before he builds draws a model, or gives a draught of the building in his book, or upon a table; there he will show you every room and contrivance: in his book are all the parts of the building written, while as yet there are none of them, or before any of them are framed and set up. In allusion to architects and other artisans, David speaks of God, "*In thy book all my members were written*"; that is, Thou hast made me as exactly as if thou hadst drawn my several members and my whole proportion with a pen or pencil in a book, before thou wouldst adventure to form me up. The Lord uses no book, no pen to decipher his work. He had the perfect idea of all things in himself from everlasting; but he may well be said to work as by pattern, whose work is the most perfect pattern.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 17.*—"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me," etc. So far from thinking it a hardship to be subject to this scrutiny, he counts it a most valuable privilege. However others may regard this truth, "*to me,*" my judgment and my feelings, "*how costly,*" valuable "*are thy thoughts,*" i.e. thy perpetual attention to me.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse 17.*—"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" How cold and poor are our warmest thoughts towards God! How unspeakably loving and gloriously rich are his thoughts towards us! Compare Eph. i. 18: "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse 17.*—"How precious . . . how great is the sum of them!" Our comforts vie with the number of our sorrows, and win the game. The mercies of God passed over in a gross sum breed no admiration; but cast up the particulars, and then arithmetic is too dull an art to number them. As many dusts as a man's hands can hold, is but his handful of so many dusts; but tell them one by one, and they exceed all numeration. It was but a crown which king Solomon wore; but weigh the gold, tell the precious stones, value the richness of them, and what was it then?—*Thomas Adams.*

*Verses 17, 18.*—Behold David's love to God; sleeping and waking his mind runs upon him. There needs no arguments to bring those to our remembrance whom we love. We neglect ourselves to think upon them. A man in love wastes his spirits, vexes his mind, neglects his meat, regards not his business, his mind still feeds on that he loves. When men love that they should not, there is more need of a bridle to keep them from thinking of it, than of spurs to keep them to it. Try thy love of God by this. If thou thinkest not often of God, thou lovest him not. If thou canst not satisfy thyself with profits, pleasures, friends, and other worldly objects, but thou must turn other businesses aside, that thou mayest daily think of God, then thou lovest him.—*Francis Taylor, in "God's Glory in Man's Happiness," 1654.*

*Verses 17, 18.*—Mercies are either ordinary or extraordinary—our common necessities, or the remarkable supplies which we receive now and then at the hand of God. Thou must not only praise him for some extraordinary mercy, that comes with such pomp and observation that all thy neighbours take notice of it with thee, as the mercy which Zacharias and Elizabeth had in their son, that was noised about all the country (Luke i. 65); but also for ordinary, every-day mercies: for first, we are unworthy of the least mercy (Gen. xxxii. 10), and therefore God is worthy of praise for the least, because it is more than he owes us. Secondly, these common, ordinary mercies are many. Thus David enhanceth the mercies of this kind,—"*O God, how great is the sum of them!* If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I wake I am still with thee." As if he had said,

There is not a point of time wherein thou art not doing me good ; as soon as I open my eyes in the morning I have a new theme, in some fresh mercies given since I closed them over-night, to employ my praiseful meditations. Many little items make together a great sum. What is lighter than a grain of sand, yet what is heavier than the sand upon the sea-shore ? As little sins (such as vain thoughts and idle words), because of their multitude, arise to a great guilt, and will bring in a long bill, a heavy reckoning at last ; so, ordinary mercies, what they want in their size of some other great mercies, have compensated it in their number. Who will not say that a man shows greater kindness in maintaining one at his table with ordinary fare all the year than in entertaining him at a great feast twice or thrice in the same time ?—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse 18.*—“*They are more in number than the sand.*” Pindar says, that sand flies number (*Olymp. Ode 2*). The Pythian oracle indeed boastingly said, I know the number of the sand, and the measure of the sea (*Herodot. Clío. l. i. c. 47*). It is to this that Lucan may refer when he says, measure is not wanting to the ocean, or number to the sand (*Pharsal. l. 5, v. 182*).—*Samuel Burder.*

*Verse 18.*—“*If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.*”

If all his glorious deeds my song would tell,  
The shore's unnumbered stones I might recount as well.

*Pindar, B.C. 518—442.*

*Verse 18.*—“*When I awake, I am still with thee.*” It is the great advantage of a Christian, which he has above other men, that he has his friends always about him, and (if the fault be not his own) need never to be absent from them. In the friendship and converse of the world, we use to say, “*Friends must part,*” and those who have delight and satisfaction in one another's society must be content to leave it, and to be taken off from it. But this is the privilege of a believer that undertakes communion with God, that it is possible for him always to be with him. Again, in human converse and society we know it is ordinary for friends to dream that they are in company with one another ; but when they awake they are a great way off. But a Christian that converses with God, and has his thoughts fastened upon him, when he awakes he is still with him, which is that which is here exhibited to us in the example of the prophet David.

A godly soul should fall asleep in God's arms, like a child in the mother's lap ; it should be sung and lulled to sleep with “*songs of the night.*” And this will make him the fitter for converse with God the next day after. This is the happiness of a Christian that is careful to lie down with God, that he finds his work still as he left it, and is in the same disposition when he rises as he was at night when he lay down to rest. As a man that winds up his watch over night, he finds it going the next morning ; so is it also, as I may say, with a Christian that winds up his heart. This is a good observation to be remembered, especially in the evening afore the Sabbath.—*Thomas Horton, —1673.*

*Verse 18.*—“*When I awake, I am still with thee.*” It is no small advantage to the holy life to “*begin the day with God.*” The saints are wont to leave their hearts with him over night, that they may find them with him in the morning. Before earthly things break in upon us, and we receive impressions from abroad, it is good to season the heart with thoughts of God, and to consecrate the early and virgin operations of the mind before they are prostituted to baser objects. When the world gets the start of religion in the morning, it can hardly overtake it all the day ; and so the heart is habituated to vanity all the day long. But when we begin with God, we take him along with us to all the business and comforts of the day ; which, being seasoned with his love and fear, are the more sweet and savoury to us.—*Thomas Case (1598—1682), in the Epistle Dedicatory to “The Morning Exercise.”*

*Verse 18.*—“*When I awake.*” Accustom yourself to a serious meditation every morning. Fresh airing our souls in heaven will engender in us a purer spirit and nobler thoughts. A morning seasoning will secure us for all the day. Though other necessary thoughts about our calling will and must come in, yet when we have dispatched them, let us attend to our morning theme as our chief companion. As a man that is going with another about some considerable business, suppose to Westminster, though he meets with several friends on the way, and salutes some, and with others with whom he has some affairs he spends some little time, yet he quickly returns to his companion, and both together go to their intended stage.

Do thus in the present case. Our minds are active and will be doing something, though to little purpose; and if they be not fixed upon some noble object, they will, like madmen and fools, be mightily pleased in playing with straws. The thoughts of God were the first visitors David had in the morning. God and his heart met together as soon as he was awake, and kept company all the day after.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 19.—“*Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.*” The expression, “*bloody men,*” or “*men of blood,*” includes not only homicides, who shed human blood, but all other wicked and evil doers, who injure, or seek to injure others, or who slay their own souls by sin, or the souls of others by scandal; all of whom may be truly called homicides; for hatred may be called the mainspring of homicide, and thus St. John says, “*Whoso hateth his brother is a homicide.*”—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 19.—“*Therefore.*” When we have a controversy with the wicked we should take heed that private spleen do not rule us, but that only our interest in God’s quarrel with them doth move us, as the Psalmist doth here.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 20.—“*Thine enemies take thy name in vain.*” In every action three things are considerable,—the *end*, the *agent*, the *work*. These three duly weighed, we shall soon see what it is to take God’s name in vain.

I. That which hath no end proposed, or is done to no end, may truly be said to be done in vain. As the sowing of seed without reaping the fruit, the planting a vineyard without a vintage, or feeding a flock without eating the milk of it. These are labours in vain. So he that taketh the name of God to no end, neither to God’s glory, nor the private or public good, taketh it in vain. *Cui bono?* is a question in all undertakings. If to no good, as good and better not undertaken at all; it is to no end, it is in vain. If a man have well-fashioned legs, and they be lame, *frustra pulchras habet tibia claudus*, the lame man hath them in vain. The chief end, therefore, in taking this name must be, 1. The glory of God, otherwise we open our mouths in vain, as it is in Job. God is willing to impart all his blessings to us, and requires nothing of us again but glory, which if we return not, he may say, as David did of Nabal, for whom he had done many good turns, in securing his shepherds and flocks, etc.; and when he desired nothing but a little meat for the young men he denied it: All that I have done for this fellow is in vain; in vain have I kept all he hath. So, God having done so much for us, and expecting nothing but the glory of his name, if we be defective herein, he may well say all that he hath done for us is in vain.

2. Next to God’s glory is the good of ourselves and others; and so to take God’s name without reference to this end, if we neither promote our own good nor the good of others, it is in vain, *ex privatione finis*, because it wants a right end; therefore Saint Paul rejoiced, having by his preaching laboured for the saving of souls, I rejoice, saith he, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

II. In the *agent* the heart and soul is to be considered, which in the person acting is the chief mover. If the soul be *Rachah*, vain and light, as when we take God’s name without due advice and reverence, though we propound a right end, yet we take his name in vain. Therefore the wise man advises “not to be rash with our mouth” (Eccl. v. 2); and the Psalmist professeth that his heart was fixed when he praised God (Ps. lvii. 7): the heart ought to be fixed and stablished by a due consideration of God’s greatness when we speak of him. This is opposed to rashness, inconstancy, and lightness, such as are in chaff and smoke, which are apt to be carried away with every blast, and such as are so qualified do take God’s name in vain.

III. In the *work* itself may be a twofold vanity, which must be avoided. Firstly, Falsehood. Secondly, Injustice.

1. If it be *false*, then is it also vain, as theirs in Isaiah (ch. xxviii. 15): “We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.” And this is that *actio erroris*, work of error, of which Jeremiah speaketh. *Vanitas opponitur veritati*, vanity is opposed to verity and truth; therefore a thing is said to be vain when it is false or erroneous. “They are vanity, the work of errors,” saith the prophet (Jer. x. 15); and as there is truth in natural things, so is there a truth in moral things, which if it be wanting, our speech is vain.

2. If *unjust* it is vain too. "If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain?" saith holy Job (ch. ix. 29); "The very hope of unjust men perisheth," saith the wise man (Prov. xi. 7); and, "They walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain" (Ps. xxxix. 6). If justice be wanting in our actions, or truth in our assertions and promises, they are vain; and to use God's name in either is to take his name in vain. So that if either we take the name of God to no end, but make it common, and take it up as a custom till it come to a habit, not for any good end; or if our hearts be not stable or fixed, but light and inconstant when we take it; or if we take it to colour or bolster up any falsehood or any unjust act, we take it in vain, and break the commandment.—*Lancelot Andrews*.

Verse 21.—"Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?" The simple future in the first clause comprehends several distinct shades of meaning. Do I not, may I not, must I not, hate those hating thee? Hate them, not as man hates, but as God hates.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 21.—"Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?" Can he who thinks good faith the holiest thing in life, avoid being an enemy to that man who, as quæstor, dared to despoil, desert, and betray? Can he who wishes to pay due honours to the immortal gods, by any means avoid being an enemy to that man who has plundered all their temples?—*Cicero*.

Verse 21.—"And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" The expression here—"grieved"—explains the meaning of the word "hate" in the former member of the verse. It is not that hatred which is followed by malignity or ill-will; it is that which is accompanied with grief, pain of heart, pity, sorrow. So the Saviour looked on men: Mark iii. 5: "And when he had looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts." The Hebrew word used here, however, contains *also* the idea of being disgusted with; of loathing; of nauseating. The feeling referred to is anger—conscious disgust—at such conduct; grief, pain, sorrow, that men should evince such feelings towards their Maker.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 21.—"Am not I grieved?" etc. Acted upon by mingled feelings of sorrow for them, and loathing at their evil practices. Thus our Lord "looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts": Mark iii. 5.—*French and Skinner*.

Verse 21.—It is said that Adam Smith disliked nothing more than that moral apathy—that obtuseness of moral perception—which prevents man from not only seeing clearly, but feeling strongly, the broad distinction between virtue and vice, and which, under the pretext of liberality, is all indulgent even to the blackest crimes. At a party at Dalkeith Palace, where Mr. —, in his mawkish way, was finding palliations for some villainous transactions, the doctor waited in patient silence until he was gone, then exclaimed: "Now I can breathe more freely. I cannot bear that man; he has no indignation in him."

Verses 21, 22.—A faithful servant hath the same interests, the same friends, the same enemies, with his master, whose cause and honour he is, upon all occasions, in duty bound to support and maintain. A good man hates, as God himself doth; he hates not the persons of men, but their sins; not what God made them, but what they have made themselves. We are neither to hate the men, on account of the vices they practise; nor to love the vices, for the sake of the men who practise them. He who observeth invariably this distinction, fulfilleth the perfect law of charity, and hath the love of God and of his neighbour abiding in him.—*George Horne*.

Verses 21, 22.—First, we must hate the company and society of manifest and obstinate sinners, who will not be reclaimed. Secondly, all their sins, not communicating with any man in his sin, we must have no fellowship (as with the workers so) with the unfruitful works of darkness. Thirdly, all occasions and inducements unto these sins. Fourthly, all appearances of wickedness (1 Thess. v. 22), that is, which men in common judgment account evil; and all this must proceed from a good ground, even from a good heart hating sin perfectly, that is all sin, as David, "I hate them with perfect hatred;" and not as some, who can hate some sin, but cleave to some other: as many can hate pride, but love covetousness or some other darling sin: but we must attain to the hatred of all, before we can come to the practice of this precept [Jude 23]; besides that, all sins are hateful even in themselves.—*William Perkins*, 1558—1602.

*Verses 21, 24.*—The temper of mourning for public sins, for the sins of others, is the greatest note of sincerity. When all other signs of righteousness may have their exceptions, this temper is the utmost term, which we cannot go beyond in our self-examination. The utmost prospect David had of his sincerity, when he was upon a diligent enquiry after it, was his anger and grief for the sin of others. When he had reached so far, he was at a stand, and knew not what more to add: "Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me." If there be anything that better can evidence my sincerity than this, Lord, acquaint me with it; "know my heart," *i.e.*, make me to know it. He whose sorrow is only for matter confined within his own breast, or streams with it in his life, has reason many times to question the truth of it; but when a man cannot behold sin as sin in another without sensible regret, it is a sign he hath savingly felt the bitterness of it in his own soul. It is a high pitch and growth, and a consent between the Spirit of God and the soul of a Christian, when he can lament those sins in others whereby the Spirit is grieved; when he can rejoice with the Spirit rejoicing, and mourn with the Spirit mourning. This is a clear testimony that we have not self-ends in the service of God; that we take not up religion to serve a turn; that God is our aim, and Christ our beloved.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse 22.*—"I hate them with perfect hatred." What is "with a perfect hatred"? I hated in them their iniquities, I loved thy creation. This it is to hate with a perfect hatred, that neither on account of the vices thou hate the men, nor on account of the men love the vices. For see what he addeth, "*They became my enemies.*" Not only as God's enemies but as his own too doth he now describe them. How then will he fulfil in them both his own saying, "*Have not I hated those that hated thee, Lord,*" and the Lord's command, "*Love your enemies*"? How will he fulfil this, save with that perfect hatred, that he hate in them that they are wicked, and love that they are men? For in the time even of the Old Testament, when the carnal people was restrained by visible punishments, how did Moses, the servant of God, who by understanding belonged to the New Testament, how did he hate sinners when he prayed for them, or how did he not hate them when he slew them, save that he "*hated them with a perfect hatred*"? For with such perfection did he hate the iniquity which he punished, as to love the manhood for which he prayed.—*Augustine.*

*Verse 23.*—"Try me." True faith is precious; it is like gold, it will endure a trial. Presumption is but a counterfeit, and cannot abide to be tried: 1 Pet. i. 7. A true believer fears no trial. He is willing to be tried by God. He is willing to have his faith tried by others, he shuns not the touchstone. He is much in testing himself. He would not take anything upon trust, especially that which is of such moment. He is willing to hear the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and distinguishing: Heb. iv. 12. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a false conceit of his spiritual state. When trials are offered, he complies with the apostle's advice, 2 Cor. xiii. 5.—*David Clarkson.*

*Verse 23.*—What fearful dilemma have we here? The Holiest changeth not when he comes a visitant to a human heart. He is the same there that he is in the highest heaven. He cannot look upon sin; and how can a human heart welcome him into its secret chambers? How can the blazing fire welcome the quenching water? It is easy to commit to memory the seemly prayer of an ancient penitent, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.*" The dead letters, worn smooth by frequent use, may drop freely from callous lips, leaving no sense of scalding on the conscience; and yet, truth of God, though they are, they may be turned into a lie in the act of utterance. The prayer is not true, although it is borrowed from the Bible, if the suppliant invite the All-seeing in, and yet would give a thousand worlds, if he had them, to keep him out for ever.

Christ has declared the difficulty, and solved it: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." When the Son has made the sinner free, he is free indeed. The dear child, pardoned and reconciled, loves and longs for the Father's presence. What! is there neither spot nor wrinkle now upon the man, that he dares to challenge inspection by the Omniscient, and to offer

his heart as Jehovah's dwelling-place? He is not yet so pure; and well he knows it. The groan is bursting yet from his broken heart: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Many stains defile him yet; but he loathes them now, and longs to be free. The difference between an unconverted and a converted man is not that the one has sins, and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins. He is out with his former friends, and in with his former adversary. Conversion is a turning, and it is one turning only; but it produces simultaneously and necessarily two distinct efforts. Whereas his face was formerly turned away from God, and toward his own sins; it is now turned away from his own sins, and toward God. This one turning, with its twofold result, is in Christ the Mediator, and through the work of the Spirit.

As long as God is my enemy, I am his. I have no more power to change that condition than the polished surface has to refrain from reflecting the sunshine that falls upon it. It is God's love, from the face of Jesus shining into my dark heart, that makes my heart open to him, and delight to be his dwelling-place. The eyes of the just Avenger I cannot endure to be in this place of sin; but the eye of the compassionate Physician I shall gladly admit into this place of disease; for he comes from heaven to earth that he may heal such sin-sick souls as mine. When a disciple desires to be searched by the living God, he does not thereby intimate that there are no sins in him to be discovered: he intimates rather that his foes are so many and so lively, that nothing can subdue them except the presence and power of God.—*William Arnot* (—1875), in "*Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth.*"

Verses 23, 24.—There are several things worthy of notice in the Psalmist's appeal, in the words before us. First, notice *the Psalmist's intrepidity*. Here is a man determined to explore the recesses of his own heart. Did Buonaparte, did Nelson, did Wellington, ever propose to do this? Were all the renowned heroes of antiquity present, I would ask them all if they ever had courage to enter into their own hearts. David was a man of courage. When he slew a lion in the way, when he successfully encountered a bear, when he went out to meet the giant Goliath, he gave undoubted proofs of courage; but never did he display such signal intrepidity as when he determined to look into his own heart. If you stood upon some eminence, and saw all the ravenous and venomous creatures that ever lived collected before you, it would not require such courage to combat them as to combat with your own heart. Every sin is a devil, and each may say, "My name is Legion, for we are many." Who knows what it is to face himself? And yet, if we would be saved, this must be done.

Secondly, notice *the Psalmist's integrity*. He wished to know all his sins, that he might be delivered from them. As every individual must know his sins at some period, a wise man will seek to know them here, because the present is the only time in which to glorify God, by confessing, by renouncing, by overcoming them. One of the attributes of sin is to hide man from himself, to conceal his deformity, to prevent him from forming a just conception of his true condition. It is a solemn fact, that there is not an evil principle in the bosom of the devil himself which does not exist in ours, at the present moment, unless we are fully renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. That these evil principles do not continually develop themselves, in all their hideous deformity, is entirely owing to the restraining and forbearing mercy of God.

Thirdly, notice *the Psalmist's wisdom*. He presents his prayer to God himself. God is the only Being in the universe that knows himself—that peruses himself in his own light. In the same light he sees all other beings; and hence it follows that, if other beings see themselves truly, it must be in the light of God. If the sun were an intelligent being, I would ask him, "How do you see yourself? In your own light?" And he would reply, "Yes." "And how do you see the planets that are continually revolving around you?" "In my own light also, for all the light that is in them is borrowed from me."

You will observe that the Psalmist begins with his principles: his desire is to have these tried by a competent judge, and to have every thing that is evil removed from them. This is an evidence of his wisdom. The heart and its thoughts must be made right, before the actions of the life can be set right. Those who are most eminent for piety are most conversant with God; and, for this reason, they become most conversant with themselves. David says, elsewhere, "Who can understand

his errors? Cleanse THOU me from *secret* faults." And Job says, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make me never so clean, yet shalt THOU plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." When these holy men perused themselves in God's light, they saw their sins of omission and commission, and prayed earnestly to be delivered from all.—*William Howels*, 1832.

Verses 23, 24.—The text is a prayer, and it indicates, as we think, three great facts in regard to the suppliant: the first, that David thoroughly wished to become acquainted with himself; the second, that he felt conscious that God could see through all disguises; and the third, that he desired to discover, in order that by Divine help he might correct, whatsoever was wrong in his conduct.

Now, the first inference which we draw from the text, when considered as indicating the feelings of the petitioner is, that he was thoroughly honest, that it was really his wish to become acquainted with his own heart. And is there, you may say, anything rare or remarkable in this? Indeed we think there is. It would need, we believe, a very high degree of piety to be able to put up with sincerity the prayers of our text. For, will you tell me that it does not often happen, that even whilst men are carrying on a process of self-examination, there is a secret wish to remain ignorant of certain points, a desire not to be proved wrong when interest and inclination combine in demanding an opposite verdict? . . . In searching into yourselves, you know where the tender points are, and those points you will be apt to avoid, so as not to put yourselves to pain, nor make it evident how much you need the caustic and the knife. Indeed, we may be sure that we state nothing but what experience will prove, when we declare it a high attainment in religion to be ready to know how bad we are. . . . And this had evidently been reached by the Psalmist, for he pleads very earnestly with God that he would leave no recess of his spirit unexplored, that he would bring the heart and all its thoughts, the life and all its ways, under a most searching examination, so that no form and no degree of evil might fail to be detected.—*Henry Melvill*.

Verses 23, 24.—Self-examination is not the simple thing which, at first sight, it might appear. No Christian who has ever really practised it has found it easy. Is there any exercise of the soul which any one of us has found so unsatisfactory, so almost impossible, as self-examination? The fact is this, that the heart is so exceedingly complicated and intricate, and it is so very near the eye which has to investigate it, and both it and the eye are so restless and so shifting, that its deep anatomy baffles our research. Just a few things, here and there, broad and open, and floating upon the surface, a man discovers; but there are chambers receding within chambers, in that deepest of all deep things, a sinner's heart, which no mere human investigation ever will reach, . . . it is the prerogative of God alone to "search" the human heart.

To the child of God—the most intimate with himself in all the earth—I do not hesitate to say—"There are sins latent at this moment in you, of which you have no idea; but it only requires a larger measure of spiritual illumination to impress and unfold them. You have no idea of the wickedness that is now in you." But while I say this, let every Christian count well the cost before he ventures on the bold act of asking God to "search" him. For be sure of this, if you do really and earnestly ask God to "search" you, he will do it. And he will search you most searchingly; and if you ask him to "try" you, he will try you,—and the trial will be no light matter!

I am persuaded that we often little calculate what we are doing—what we are asking God to do—when we implore him to give us some spiritual attainment, some growth in grace, some increase in holiness, or peace. To all these things there is a condition, and that condition lies in a discipline, and that discipline is generally proportionate to the strength and the measure of the gift that we ask.

I do not know what may have been the state of the Psalmist at the period when he indited this Psalm; but I should think either one of Saul's most cruel persecutions, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, followed quick upon the traces of that prayer,—*"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts,"* etc.

Still, whatever his attainment, every child of God will desire, at any sacrifice, to know his own exact state before God; for, as he desires in all things to have a mind conformed to the mind of God, so he is especially jealous lest he should, by any means, be taking a different view, or estimate, of his own soul from that which God sees it.—*Condensed from James Vaughan*.

Verses 23, 24.—Hypocrisy at the fashionable end of the town is very different

from hypocrisy in the city. The modish hypocrite endeavours to appear more vicious than he really is, the other kind of hypocrite more virtuous. The former is afraid of everything that has the show of religion in it, and would be thought engaged in many criminal gallantries and amours which he is not guilty of. The latter assumes a face of sanctity, and covers a multitude of vices under a seeming religious deportment.

But there is another kind of hypocrisy, which differs from both these; I mean that hypocrisy by which a man does not only deceive the world, but very often imposes on himself; that hypocrisy which conceals his own heart from him, and makes him believe he is more virtuous than he really is, and either not attend to his vices, or mistake even his vices for virtues. It is this fatal hypocrisy and self-deceit which is taken notice of in those words, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."

These two kinds of hypocrisy, namely, that of deceiving the world, and that of imposing on ourselves, are touched with wonderful beauty in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. The folly of the first kind of hypocrisy is there set forth by reflections on God's omniscience and omnipresence, which are celebrated in as noble strains of poetry as any other I ever met with, either sacred or profane. The other kind of hypocrisy, whereby a man deceives himself, is intimated in the two last verses, where the Psalmist addresses himself to the great Searcher of hearts in that emphatical petition; "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*Joseph Addison* (1672—1719), in "*The Spectator*."

*Verses 23, 24.*—How beautiful is the humility of David! He cannot speak of the wicked but in terms of righteous indignation; he cannot but hate the haters of his God; yet, he seems immediately to recollect, and to check himself—"Try me, O Lord, and seek the ground of my heart." Precisely in the same spirit of inward humility and self-recollection, Abraham, when pleading before God in prayer for guilty depraved Sodom, fails not to speak of *himself*, as being dust and ashes: Gen. xviii. 27.—*James Ford*, 1871.

*Verses 23, 24.*—Why did David pray thus to God, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart,*" having said before, in the first verse, "*Thou hast searched me, and known me*"? Seeing David knew that God had searched him, what needed he to pray that God would search him? why did he beg God to do that which he had done already? The answer is at hand. David was a diligent self-searcher, and therefore he was so willing to be searched, yea, he delighted to be searched by God; and that not (as was said) because himself had done it already, but also because he knew God could do it better. He knew by his own search that he did not live in any way of wickedness against his knowledge, and yet he knew there might be some way of wickedness in him that he knew not of. And therefore he doth not only say, "*Search me, O God, and know my thoughts*"; but he adds, "*See if there be any wicked way (or any way of pain and grief) in me*"; (the same word signifies both, because wicked ways lead in the end to pain and grief); "*and lead me in the way everlasting.*" As if he had said, Lord, I have searched myself, and can see no wicked way in me; but, Lord, thy sight is infinitely clearer than mine, and if thou wilt but search me thou mayest see some wicked way in me which I could not see, and I would fain see and know the worst of myself, that I might amend and grow better; therefore, Lord, if there be any such way in me, cause me to know it also. O take that way out of me, and take me out of that way; "*lead me in the way everlasting.*" David had tried himself, and he would again be tried by God, that he, being better tried, might become yet better. He found himself gold upon his own trial, and yet he feared there might be some dross in him that he had not found; and now he would be re-tried that he might come forth purest gold. Pure gold fears neither the furnace nor the fire, neither the test nor the touchstone; nor is weighty gold afraid of the balance. He that is weight will be weight, how often soever he is weighed; he that is gold will be gold, how often soever he is tried, and the oftener he is tried the purer gold he will be; what he is he will be, and he would be better than he is.—*Joseph Caryl*.

*Verse 24.*—"See if there be any wicked way in me." This is a beautiful and impressive prayer for the commencement of every day. It is, also, a great sentiment to admonish us at the beginning of each day.



There is the way of *unbelief* within, to which we are very prone. There is the way of *vanity* and pride, to which we often accustom ourselves. There is the way of *selfishness* in which we frequently walk. There is the way of *worldliness* we often pursue—empty pleasures, shadowy honours, etc. There is the way of *sluggishness*. What apathy in prayer, in the examination and application of God's Word, we manifest! There is the way of *self-dependence*, by which we often dishonour God and injure ourselves. There is, unhappily, the way of *disobedience*, in which we often walk. At any rate, our obedience is cold, reluctant, uncertain—not simple, entire, fervent.

How necessary is it, then, to go to God at once, and earnestly to prefer the petition, "Lord, see if there be any wicked way in me." Let nothing that is wrong, that is opposed to thy character, repugnant to thy word, or injurious and debasing to ourselves, remain, or be harboured within us.—*Condensed from T. Wallace, in "Homiletic Commentary."*

*Verse 24.*—"See if there be any wicked way in me." To what a holiness must David have attained ere he could need, if we may so speak, Divine scrutiny, in order to his being informed of errors and defects! Is there one of us who can say that he has corrected his conduct up to the measure of his knowledge, and that now he must wait the being better informed before he can do more towards improving his life? I do not know how to define a higher point in religious attainment than supposing a man warranted in offering up the prayer of our text. I call upon you to be cautious in using this prayer. It is easy to mock God, by asking him to search you whilst you have made but little effort to search yourselves, and perhaps still less to act upon the result of the scrutiny.—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse 24.*—"See if there be any wicked way in me," etc.—

Think and be careful what thou art within,  
For there is sin in the desire of sin :  
Think and be thankful, in a different case,  
For there is grace in the desire of grace.

*John Byrom, 1691—1763.*

*Verse 24.*—"The way everlasting." Way of eternity, or of antiquity, the old way, as Jer. vi. 16 ; meaning the way of faith and godliness, which God taught from the beginning, and which continueth for ever ; contrary to "the way of the wicked," which perisheth : Ps. i. 6.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verses 1 and 23.*—A matter of fact made a matter of prayer.

*Verse 1.*—1. A cheering thought for sinners. If God knew them not perfectly, how could he have prepared a perfect salvation for them? 2. A comfortable truth for saints. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."—*G. R.*

*Verses 1—5.*—In these verses we have God's Omniscience, I. Described. 1. As observing minute and comparatively unimportant actions: "My downsitting and uprising." 2. As taking note of our thoughts and the motives behind them: "Understandest my thought." 3. As investigating all our ways: "Thou passest," etc.; better rendered, "Thou triest my walking and lying down," *i.e.*, my activities and restings. 4. Accurately estimating every word at the instant of its utterance: "For there is not a word," etc. 5. As being "behind" men, remembering their past, and "before" men, acquainted with their future: "Thou hast beset me," etc. 6. As every instant holding men under watchful scrutiny: "And laid," etc. II. Personally realized and pondered: "Thou hast searched me." *Me* and *my* run through the whole set of statements. Thus felt and used, the fact of God's omniscience. 1. Begets reverence. 2. Inspires confidence. 3. Produces carefulness of conduct.—*J. F.*

*Verses 2—4.*—The knowledge of God extends, I. To our movements, our "downsitting and uprising"—when we sit down to read, write, or converse, and when we rise up to active service. II. To our thoughts: "Thou understandest my thoughts

afar off." What they have been, what they now are, what they will be, what under all circumstances they would have been. He who made minds knows what their thoughts will be at all times, or he could not predict future events, or govern the world. He can know our thoughts without being the Author of them. III. To our actions: verse 3. Every step we take by day, and all we purpose to do in wakeful hours of the night: all our private, social, and public ways, are compassed or sifted by him, to distinguish the good from the bad, as wheat from the chaff. IV. To our words: verse 4. It has been said that the words of all men and from all time are registered in the atmosphere, and may be faithfully recalled. Whether it be so or not, they are phonographed in the mind of God.—*G. R.*

*Verse 2 (first clause).*—The importance of the commonest acts of life.

*Verse 2 (second clause).*—The serious nature of thoughts. Known to God; seen through, their drift perceived; and attention given to them while as yet in the distance.

*Verse 3.*—The encircling Presence, in our activities, meditations, secrecies, and movements.

*Verse 4.*—I. Words on the tongue first *in* it, and in that stage known to God. II. Words on the tongue very numerous, yet all known. III. Words on the tongue have wide meaning, yet known "altogether." Lesson: Take heed of your words not yet spoken.

*Verse 5.*—A soul captured. Stopped, overtaken, arrested. What has it done? What shall it do?

*Verse 6.*—I. God imperfectly known to man. II. Man perfectly known to God. It has been said that wise men never wonder; to us it appears they are always wondering.—*G. R.*

*Verse 6.*—Theme: the facts of our religion, too wonderful to understand, are just those in which we have most reason to rejoice. I. Prove it. 1. The incomprehensible attributes of God give unspeakable value to his promises. 2. The Incarnation is at once the most complete and most endearing manifestation of God we possess, yet it is the most inexplicable. 3. Redemption by the death of Christ is the highest guarantee of salvation we can conceive; but who can explain it? 4. Inspiration makes the Bible the word of God, though none can give an account of its mode of operation in the minds of those "moved by the Holy Ghost." 5. The resurrection of the body, and its glorification, satisfy the deepest yearning of our soul (Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 2—4); but none can conceive the how. II. Apply its lessons. 1. Let us not stumble at doctrines simply because they are mysterious. 2. Let us be thankful God has not kept back the great mysteries of our religion simply because there would be some offended at them. 3. Let us readily receive all the joy which the mysteries bring, and calmly wait the light of heaven to make them better understood.—*J. F.*

*Verses 7—10.*—I. God is wherever I am. I fill but a small part of space; he fills all space. II. He is wherever I shall be. He does not move with me, but I move in him. "In him we live, and move," etc. III. God is wherever I could be. "If I ascend to heaven," etc. "If I descend to Sheol," etc. If I travel with the sunbeams to the most distant part of the earth, or heavens, or the sea, I shall be in thy hand. No mention is here made of annihilation, as though that were possible; which would be the only escape from the Divine Presence; for he is not the God of the dead, of the annihilated, in the Sadducean meaning of the word, but of the living. Man is always somewhere, and God is always everywhere.—*G. R.*

*Verse 8.*—The glory of heaven and the terror of hell: "ΘΟΥ."

*Verses 9, 10.*—I. The greatest security and encouragement to a sinner supposed. 1. The place—the remotest part of the sea; by which you are to understand the most obscure nook in the creation. 2. His swift and speedy flight after the commission of sin, to this supposed refuge and sanctuary: "If I take the wings of the morning." II. This supposed security and encouragement is utterly destroyed (verse 10).—*See Flavel's "Seaman's Preservative in Foreign Countries."*

*Verses 11, 12.*—Darkness and light are both alike to God. I. Naturally. "I form the light, and I create the darkness." II. Providentially. Providential dispensations that are dark to us are light to him. We change with respect to him, not he to us. III. Spiritually. "Let him that walketh in darkness," etc. "Yea, though I walk," etc. He went before them in a pillar of cloud to guide them by day, and a pillar of fire to guide them by night. It was the same God in the day-cloud and in the night-light.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—“ I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” This is true of man in his fourfold state. I. In his primitive integrity. II. In his deplorable depravity. III. In his regeneration. IV. In his fixed state in hell or heaven.—*W. W.*

Verses 17, 18.—The Psalm dilates upon the omniscience of God. In no mournful manner, but the reverse. I. *God's thoughts of us.* 1. How certain. 2. How numerous. 3. How condescending. 4. How tender. 5. How wise. 6. How practical. 7. How constant. II. *Our thoughts upon his thoughts.* 1. How rare and yet how due to the subject. 2. How delightful. 3. How consoling. 4. How strengthening to faith. 5. How arousing to love. III. *Our thoughts upon God himself.* 1. They place us near God. 2. They keep us near God. 3. They restore us to him. We are with God when we awake from sleep, from lethargy, from death.

Verses 17, 18.—I. The saint precious to God. He thinks of him tenderly; in countless ways; perpetually. II. God precious to the saints. Noting God's loving-kindnesses, numbering them, newly awakening to them. III. The mingling of these loves: “ I am still with thee.”—*W. B. H.*

Verse 18.—“ *When I awake I am still with thee.*” Awakening is sometimes, yea, most commonly, taken in the *natural signification*, for the recovery from bodily sleep. 2. *Morally*, for recovery from sin. 3. *Mystically*; “ when I shall awake,” that is, from the sleep of death.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 18.—“ A Christian on Earth still in Heaven” [an Appendix to “ A Christian on the Mount; or, A Treatise concerning Meditation ”], by *Thomas Watson*, 1660.

Verse 18.—“ *I am still with thee.*” 1. By way of meditation. 2. In respect to communion. 3. In regard of action, and the businesses which are done by us.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 19.—I. The doctrine of punishment the necessary outcome of omniscience. II. Inevitable judgment an argument for separation from sinners.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 20.—Two scandalous offences against God. I. To speak slanderously of him. II. To speak irreverently of him. These are committed only by his enemies.

Verses 21, 22.—I. Such hatred one need not be ashamed of. II. Such hatred one should be able to define: “ *grieved.*” III. Such hatred one must labour to keep right. “ *Perfect hatred* ” is a form of hate consistent with all the virtues.

Verses 23, 24.—The language, I. Of self-examination. 1. As in the sight of God. 2. With a desire for the help of God: verse 23. Look me through and through, and tell me what thou thinkest of me. II. Of self-renunciation: “ *See if,* ” etc. (verse 24); any sin unpardoned, any evil disposition unsubdued, any evil habit unrestrained, that I may renounce it. III. Of self-dedication: “ *Lead me,* ” etc.: a submission entirely to divine guidance in the future.—*G. R.*

Verse 24.—I. The evil way. Naturally in us; may be of different kinds; must be removed; removal needs Divine help. II. The everlasting way. There is but one, we need leading in it. It is the good old way, it does not come to an end; it leads to blessedness without end.

Verse 24 (*last clause*).—See “ *Spurgeon's Sermons,* ” No. 903: “ *The Way Everlasting.* ”