

PSALM XCIX.

This may be called THE SANCTUS, or, THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM, for the word "holy" is the conclusion and the refrain of its three main divisions. Its subject is the holiness of the divine government, the sanctity of the mediatorial reign. It seems to us to declare the holiness of Jehovah himself in verses 1, 2, 3; it mentions the equity of the king whom the Lord had appointed, as an illustration of the Lord's love of holiness, or more probably it describes the Lord as himself the king, in verses 4 and 5, and it then sets forth the severely righteous character of God's dealings with those favoured persons whom in former times he had selected to approach him on behalf of the people, 6—9. It is a hymn fitted for the cherubim who surround the throne, who are mentioned in verse 1; it is a Psalm most fitting for saints who dwell in Zion, the holy city, and especially worthy to be reverently sung by all who, like David the king, Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the priest, or Samuel the seer, are honoured to lead the church of God, and plead for her with her Lord.

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *for it is holy.*

1. "*The Lord reigneth.*" One of the most joyous utterances which ever leaped from mortal lip. The overthrow of the reign of evil and the setting up of Jehovah's kingdom of goodness, justice, and truth, is worthy to be hymned again and again, as we have it here for the third time in the Psalms. "*Let the people tremble.*" Let the chosen people feel a solemn yet joyful awe, which shall thrill their whole manhood. Saints quiver with devout emotion, and sinners quiver with terror when the rule of Jehovah is fully perceived and felt. It is not a light or trifling matter, it is a truth which, above all others, should stir the depths of our nature. "*He sitteth between the cherubims.*" In grandeur of sublime glory, yet in nearness of mediatorial condescension, Jehovah revealed himself above the mercy-seat, whereon stood the likeness of those flaming ones who gaze upon his glory, and for ever cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." The Lord reigning on that throne of grace which is sprinkled with atoning blood, and veiled with the covering wings of mediatorial love, is above all other revelations wonderful, and fitted to excite emotion among all mankind, hence it is added, "*Let the earth be moved.*" Not merely "the people," but the whole earth should feel a movement of adoring awe when it is known that on the mercy seat God sits as universal monarch. The pomp of heaven surrounds him, and is symbolised by the outstretched wings of waiting cherubs; let not the earth be less moved to adoration, rather let all her tribes bow before his infinite majesty, yea, let the solid earth itself with reverent tremor acknowledge his presence.

2. "*The Lord is great in Zion.*" Of old the temple's sacred hill was the centre of the worship of the great King, and the place where his grandeur was most clearly beheld: his church is now his favoured palace, where his greatness is displayed, acknowledged, and adored. He there unveils his attributes and commands the lowliest homage; the ignorant forget him, the wicked despise him, the atheistical oppose him, but among his own chosen he is great beyond comparison. He is great in the esteem of the gracious, great in his acts of mercy, and really great in himself: great in mercy, power, wisdom, justice, and glory. "*And he is high above all the people;*" towering above their highest thoughts and loftiest conceptions. The highest are not high to him, yet, blessed be his name, the lowliest are not despised by him. In such a God we rejoice, his greatness and loftiness are exceedingly delightful in our esteem; the more he is honoured and exalted in the hearts of men, the more exultant are his people. If Israel delighted in Saul because he was head and shoulders above the people, how much more should we exult in our God and King, who is as high above us as the heavens are above the earth.

3. "Let them praise thy great and terrible name:" let all the dwellers in Zion and all the nations upon the earth praise the Lord, or "acknowledge thankfully" the goodness of his divine nature, albeit that there is so much in it which must inspire their awe. Under the most terrible aspect the Lord is still to be praised. Many profess to admire the milder beams of the sun of righteousness, but burn with rebellion against its more flaming radiance: so it ought not to be: we are bound to praise a terrible God and worship him who casts the wicked down to hell. Did not Israel praise him "who overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth for ever." The terrible Avenger is to be praised, as well as the loving Redeemer. Against this the sympathy of man's evil heart with sin rebels; it cries out for an effeminate God in whom pity has strangled justice. The well-instructed servants of Jehovah praise him in all the aspects of his character, whether terrible or tender. Grace streaming from the mercy-seat can alone work in us this admirable frame of mind. "For it is holy," or "He is holy." In him is no flaw or fault, excess or deficiency, error or iniquity. He is wholly excellent, and is therefore called holy. In his words, thoughts, acts, and revelations as well as in himself, he is perfection itself. O come let us worship and bow down before him.

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

4. "The king's strength also loveth judgment." God is the king, the mercy-seat is his throne, and the sceptre which he sways is holy like himself. His power never exerts itself tyrannically; he is a sovereign, and he is absolute in his government, but his might delights in right, his force is used for just purposes only. Men in these days are continually arraigning the Lord's government, and setting up to judge whether he does right or not; but saintly men in the olden time were of another mind, they were sure that what the Lord did was just, and instead of calling him to account they humbly submitted themselves to his will, rejoicing in the firm persuasion that with his whole omnipotence God was pledged to promote righteousness, and work justice among all his creatures. "Thou dost establish equity." Not a court of equity merely, but equity itself thou dost set up, and that not for a time or upon an occasion, but as an established institution, stable as thy throne. Not even for the sake of mercy does the Lord remove or injure the equity of his moral government; both in providence and in grace he is careful to conserve the immaculate purity of his justice. Most kingdoms have an establishment of some kind, and generally it is inequitable; here we have an establishment which is equity itself. The Lord our God demolishes every system of injustice, and right alone is made to stand. "Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob." Justice is not merely established, but executed in God's kingdom; the laws are carried out, the executive is as righteous as the legislative. Herein let all the oppressed, yea, and all who love that which is right, find large occasion for praise. Other nations under their despots were the victims and the perpetrators of grievous wrong, but when the tribes were faithful to the Lord they enjoyed an upright government within their own borders, and acted with integrity towards their neighbours. That kingcraft which delights in cunning, favouritism, and brute force is as opposite to the divine kingship as darkness to light. The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs. The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and the curses of the oppressed: the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter. Glory be to the name of the King, whose gentle glory beams from between the cherubic wings.

5. "Exalt ye the Lord our God." If no others adore him, let his own people render to him the most ardent worship. Infinite condescension makes him stoop to be called *our* God, and truth and faithfulness bind him to maintain that covenant relationship; and surely we, to whom by grace he so lovingly gives himself, should exalt him with all our hearts. He shines upon us from under the veiling wings of cherubim, and above the seat of mercy, therefore let us come *and worship at his footstool*. When he reveals himself in Christ Jesus, as our reconciled God, who allows

us to approach even to his throne, it becomes us to unite earnestness and humility, joy and adoration, and, while we exalt him, prostrate ourselves in the dust before him. Do we need to be thus excited to worship? How much ought we to blush for such backwardness! It ought to be our daily delight to magnify so good and great a God. "*For he is holy.*" A second time the note rings out, and as the ark, which was the divine footstool, has just been mentioned, the voice seems to sound forth from the cherubim where the Lord sitteth, who continually do cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" Holiness is the harmony of all the virtues. The Lord has not one glorious attribute alone, or in excess, but all glories are in him as a whole; this is the crown of his honour and the honour of his crown. His power is not his choicest jewel, nor his sovereignty, but his holiness. In this all-comprehensive moral excellence he would have his creatures take delight, and when they do so their delight is evidence that their hearts have been renewed, and they themselves have been partakers of his holiness. The gods of the heathen were, according to their own votaries, lustful, cruel, and brutish; their only claim to reverence lay in their supposed potency over human destinies: who would not far rather adore Jehovah, whose character is unsullied purity, unswerving justice, unbending truth, unbounded love, in a word, perfect holiness?

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy.

6. "*Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name.*" Though not ordained to the typical priesthood, Moses was a true priest, even as Melchizedek had been before him. God has ever had a priesthood beside and above that of the law. The three holy men here mentioned all stood in his courts, and saw his holiness, each one after his own order. Moses saw the Lord in flaming fire revealing his perfect law, Aaron full often watched the sacred fire devour the sin-offering, and Samuel witnessed the judgment of the Lord on Eli's house, because of the error of his way. These each one stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because his holiness had been insulted; and acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would in a dreadful manner have executed judgment in Jacob. Let these men, or such as these, lead us in our worship, and let us approach the Lord at the mercy-seat as they did, for he is as accessible to us as to them. They made it their life's business to call upon him in prayer, and by so doing brought down innumerable blessings upon themselves and others. Does not the Lord call us also to come up into the mount with Moses, and to enter the most holy place with Aaron? Do we not hear him call us by our name as he did Samuel? And do we not answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? "*They called upon the Lord, and he answered them.*" Not in vain were their prayers; but being a holy God he was true to his promises, and hearkened to them from off the mercy-seat. Here is reason for praise, for answers to the petitions of some are proofs of God's readiness to hear others. These three men asked large things, they pleaded for a whole nation, and they stayed great plagues and turned away fiery wrath; who would not exercise himself in adoring so great and merciful a God? If he were unholy he would be false to his word and refuse his people's cries; this, then, is recorded for our joy and for his glory, that holy men of old were not suffered to pray in vain.

7. "*He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar.*" We have had mention of the ark and the shekinah, and now of the fiery cloudy pillar, which was another visible token of the presence of God in the midst of Israel. Responses came to Moses and Aaron out of that glorious overshadowing cloud, and though Samuel saw it not, yet to him also came the mystic voice which was wont to thunder forth from that divine canopy. Men have had converse with God, let men therefore speak to God in return. He has told us things to come, let us in return confess the sins which are past; he has revealed his mind to us, let us then pour out our hearts before him.

"*They kept his testimonies.*" When others turned aside they were faithful; in their hearts they laid up his word, and in their lives they obeyed it. When he spake to them they observed his will, and therefore when they spake to him he yielded to their desires. This keeping of the divine testimonies is a virtue all too rare in these our days; men run after their own views and opinions, and make light of the truth of God; hence it is that they fail in prayer, and scoffers have even dared to say that prayer avails not at all. May the good Lord bring back his people to reverence his word, and then will he also have respect unto the voice of their cry. "*And the ordinance that he gave them.*" His practical precept they observed as well as his doctrinal instruction. Ordinances are not to be trifled with, or testimonies will also be despised; and the converse is also true, a light estimate of inspired dogma is sure to end in neglect of moral virtues. To Moses, Aaron, and Samuel special and personal charges were committed, and they were all true to their trust, for they stood in awe of the Lord their God, and worshipped him with their whole souls. They were very different men, and had each one a work to do peculiar to himself, yet because each was a man of prayer they were all preserved in their integrity, fulfilled their office, and blessed their generation. Lord, teach us like Moses to hold up our hands in prayer and conquer Amalek, like Aaron to wave the censer between the living and the dead till the plague is stayed, and like Samuel to say to a guilty people, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you;" if thou wilt make us mighty with thee in prayer, we shall also be kept faithful before thee in the service which thou hast laid upon us.

8. "*Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God.*" A sweet title and a cheering fact. Our covenant God in a very special manner heard his three servants when they pleaded for the people. "*Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" He forgave the sinners, but he slew their sins. Some apply this verse to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and remind us that each of these fell into a fault and received chastisement. Of Samuel they assert that, for having set up his sons as his successors, he was compelled to submit to the anointing of Saul as king, which was a great grief to him; this is to our mind a very doubtful statement, and leads us to abandon the interpretation altogether. We believe that the passage refers to the nation which was spared through the intercession of these three holy men, but yet was severely chastened for its transgressions. In answer to the cry of Moses the tribes lived on, but the then existing generation could not enter Canaan: Aaron's golden calf was broken, though the fire of the Lord did not consume the people; and Israel smarted under the harsh government of Saul, though at Samuel's request its murmurings against the theocratic rule of their fathers' God was not visited with pestilence or famine. So to forgive sin as at the same time to express abhorrence of it, is the peculiar glory of God, and is best seen in the atonement of our Lord Jesus. Reader, are you a believer? Then your sin is forgiven you; but so surely as you are a child of God the rod of paternal discipline will be laid upon you if your walk be not close with God. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

9. "*Exalt the Lord our God.*" A second time the delightful title of Jehovah our God is used, and it is quickly followed by a third. The Psalm is Trinitarian in its whole structure. In each of his sacred persons the Lord is the God of his people; the Father is ours, the Son is ours, and the Holy Spirit is ours: let us exalt him with all our ransomed powers. "*And worship at his holy hill.*" Where he appoints his temple let us resort. No spot of ground is now fenced about as peculiarly holy, or to be regarded as more sacred than another; yet his visible church is his chosen hill, and there would we be found, numbered with his people, and unite with them in worship. "*For the Lord our God is holy.*" Again this devout description is repeated, and made the climax of the song. Oh for hearts made pure within, so that we may rightly perceive and worthily praise the infinite perfection of the Triune Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm has three parts, in which the Lord is celebrated as he who is to come, as he who is, and as he who was.—*John Albert Bengel, 1687—1752.*

Whole Psalm.—In each of the three strophes Jehovah is acknowledged in his peculiar covenant relation to his people. In the first he is “great in Zion” (ver. 2); in the second, he has “executed righteousness in Jacob” (ver. 4); and he is “Jehovah our God” (ver. 5); in the third, the great examples of this covenant relationship are cited from Israel’s ancient history; and again God is twice claimed as “Jehovah our God” (ver. 8 and 9).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—There are three Psalms which begin with the words, “The LORD (JEHOVAH) reigneth.” (Pss. xciii., xcvi., xcix.) This is the third and last of these Psalms; and it is remarkable that in this Psalm the words “*He is holy*” are repeated three times (verses 3, 5, 9). Thus this Psalm is one of the links in the chain which connects the first revelation of God in Genesis with the full manifestation of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, which is revealed in the commission of the risen Saviour to his apostles: “Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” and which prepares the faithful to join in the heavenly Hallelujah of the church glorified, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” The other links in this chain in the Old Testament are, the Atonic benediction, in Num. vi. 24—27; and the Seraphic Trisagion, in Isa. vi. 1—3.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—Many of the preceding Psalms, in extolling the Dominion and Supremacy of the Messiah, have spoken of him solely as the object of triumph and rejoicing. He has been represented in all the bounteousness of his mercy, and the excess of his lovingkindness; and the ideas of might and majesty, with which he has been accompanied, seem chiefly to have been regarded as the means by which these gracious designs will be carried into a sure effect. There is always a great danger in such a feeling, lest our *reciprocal* covenant should be too much forgotten; and we should rest on our privileges to the exclusion of our practice. This was a constant error to the Jews. “We have Abraham to our Father,” was continually on their lips; as if the given promise to their nation had been inalienable for ever. Subsequent ages have shown the existence of the same false principle amongst the Gentiles. It is a part of the weakness of human nature; and hence was the prophet inspired to warn the world of the evil, and draw their minds to a just sense of the *awfulness* of the Redeemer’s majesty. In this view, joined as it is throughout with assertions of his readiness at all times to listen to the believer and to grant his supplication, the Psalm is at once of great power and of an exceeding consolation.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 1.—“*Let the people tremble . . . let the earth be moved.*” That fear which proceeds from simple reverence as well as that which arises from apprehension of evil, produces bodily shaking. Thus this exhortation may concern believing as well as unbelieving nations.—*Amyraldus.*

Verse 1.—“*Let the people tremble.*” He bids a defiance, as it were, to all his enemies, ὀργισθεῖσθαι, *irascantur, commoveantur, fremant populi*; let the people be angry, fret, and be unquiet, as Psal. ii. 1. “*Let the earth,*” that is, the tyrants of the earth, be moved at it; yet let them know that all their endeavours are but vain.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 1.—“*Let the people tremble.*” Jarchi refers this to the war of Gog and Magog.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—“*Let the people tremble.*” Albeit the church be compassed about with enemies, as the lily among the thorns, yet because her Lord reigneth in the midst of her, she hath reason not only to comfort herself in him, but also hath ground of defying her enemies, and boasting against them: “*The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble.*” The Lord’s people do not worship an unknown God, they know who he is, and where to find him; to wit, in his ordinances, on the throne of grace, reconciling himself to the world in Christ: “*He sitteth between the cherubims.*”—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—“*The cherubims.*” These were figures, or representations of angels, inclining their faces one towards the other, and touching one another with their wings. Ex. xxv. 18. The use of these was to cover or overshadow the *mercy-seat* with their wings, ver. 20, and from this *seat* God used to speak unto Moses, ver. 22; Num. vii. 8, 9. Which may be applied unto Christ, whose mediation was signified by the *mercy-seat*; whence it is said, that *he is a propitiation* or covering *mercy-seat*, Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10, because by his obedience all our unrighteousness is covered.—*Thomas Wilson* (—1621), in “*A Complete Christian Dictionary.*” 1678

Verse 1.—“*He sitteth between the cherubims.*” Our friend Mr. Charles Stanford,

in his delicious work, "Symbols of Christ," has beautifully brought out the connection between the 37th and 38th verses of Matt. xxiii. The house was left desolate because Christ, who was set forth by the symbol of shelter, was rejected by them, and was not permitted to cover them with his wings. It was customary for the Jews to say of a proselyte, "He has taken refuge under the wings of the Shekinah." We now see that to take shelter under the wings of the Shekinah is to hide beneath the wings of Christ. Beneath that living shield which beats back the destroying stroke, and is broad enough to canopy a fugitive world, we take shelter, and there the promise is fulfilled, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

Verse 1.—"He sitteth between the cherubims." The cherubim is the seat of God, as the scripture sheweth us, a certain exalted heavenly throne, which we see not; but the word of God knoweth it, knoweth it as his own seat: and the word of God and the Spirit of God hath itself revealed to the servants of God where God sitteth. Not that God doth sit, as doth man, but thou, if thou dost wish that God sit in thee, if thou wilt be good, shalt be the seat of God; for thus it is written, "*The soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom*" [Septuagint translation]. For a throne is in our language called a seat. For some, conversant with the Hebrew tongue, have interpreted cherubim in the Latin language (for it is a Hebrew term) by the words fulness of knowledge. Therefore, because God surpasseth all knowledge, he is said to sit above the fulness of knowledge. Let there be therefore in thee fulness of knowledge, and even thou shalt be the throne of God.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"Let the earth be moved." Those that submit to him shall be established, and not "moved," Psal. xcvi. 10; but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ cannot be moved. The "things which cannot be shaken shall remain," Heb. xii. 27.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"He is high above all the people." The metaphor is taken from such great objects as trees, animals, palaces, towers, which are the more valued, and are regarded as possessing the greater strength, the higher they rise above others. So Deut. i. 28; ii. 10, 21; ix. 2, Concerning the Canaanites and the giants.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 3.—"Let them praise thy great and terrible name," etc. Although the enemies of the Church of God are in a tumult, and the whole earth is moved, do you nevertheless with joyful spirit entrust your salvation to him, and acknowledge and diligently celebrate his power displayed in the defence of his people and the overthrow of his foes.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—"Thy great and terrible name; for it is holy." The FATHER'S name is "great," for he is the source, the Creator, the Lord of all; and the SON'S name is "terrible," for he is to be our judge; and the name of the HOLY GHOST is "holy," for he it is who bestows hallowing and sanctification. The Hebrew commentators see here the mystic Tetragrammaton יהוה, whose true pronunciation was kept a profound secret by the Rabbins, owing to a feeling of awful reverence; while the Greeks are precise in bidding us take it of that name, which is "terrible" to God's enemies, "holy" to his friends, and "great" to both, the name of JESUS.—*Hugo Cardinalis, Genebrardus, and Balthazar Corderius, in Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 3.—"Let them praise thy terrible name." What force the experience of a burdened conscience attaches to the expression, "Thy great and terrible name; for it is holy!" The misery of sin consists not merely in its consequences, but in its very nature, which is to separate between God and our souls, and to shut us out from God, and God from us. Yet the Spirit of God indicates, in the covenant of grace, a threefold practical influence of his holiness upon us, of which the issue is the opposite of despair. The various steps are marked as praise, exaltation, and worship (verses 3, 5, 9). Of these the last seems by far the most difficult to realise. For it is in the nature of conscious sin to prevent even our approaches to God, to keep us from all comfortable fellowship with God, and to fill us with a heavy sense of our infinite and almost hopeless distance from him. Yet we will "praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy." Great it is; most glorious and high; far above all human conceptions. Viewed in this light, even the fact otherwise so consoling, "The Lord reigneth," leads only to the inference, "Let the people tremble;" and "He sitteth between the cherubim" (or manifesteth himself as the covenant God)

to the conclusion, "Let the earth be moved," or *stagger*. But his name is not only great and terrible in its manifestations, "it is holy," and therefore we "praise" it. His greatness is all arrayed on the side of goodness, his power on that of righteousness and truth.—*Alfred Edersheim*, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms," 1873.

Verse 3.—"Thy terrible name . . . holy." In acts of man's vindictive justice, there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the several acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, "from his loins downward there was the appearance of fire, but from the loins upward the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber." Ezek. viii. 2. His heart is clean in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame wherewith he scorseth and burns his enemies. He is holy in the most fiery appearance.—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 3.—"It is holy." No attribute is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it as this? Isaiah vi. 3: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory;" and Rev. iv. 8: "The four living creatures rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," &c. His power of sovereignty as Lord of hosts is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear in any evangelical song any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out, Eternal, eternal, eternal; or Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts! Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven. . . . As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest; as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them: should this be sullied all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy; as at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, his wisdom a holy wisdom, his arm of power a "holy arm," Psalm xcvi. 1; his truth or promise a "holy promise," Psalm cv. 42. *Holy and true* go hand and hand, Rev. vi. 10. "His name," which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, "is holy."—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 4.—"The king's strength." They will remember his strength with joy, because he "loveth judgment," and there is no reason, therefore, to be afraid of him in consequence of his great strength, so long as they continue to walk in the good way.—*George Phillips*.

Verses 4, 5.—Our King loveth righteousness: he will execute perfect justice, tempered with perfect mercy. He will judge every man according to his works, summing up and completing the unnoticed righteousness of his providence by an open manifestation to the universe of his holiness and equity. "We believe that he will come to be our judge," therefore let us magnify and exalt him with our lips and hearts; and let us fall down and worship the man Christ Jesus, who took our nature, even his manhood, from the earth, which is his footstool, into the eternity of the Godhead, in which he is equal to the Father. As heaven, which is the throne of God, and earth, which is his footstool, form one universe, so is God and man one Christ, the everlasting Lord, "holy and true," in whom we sinners may appeal from the throne of eternal justice to the footstool of eternal mercy.—"Plain Commentary."

Verse 5 (second clause). Mark the peculiar expression, "Worship at his footstool." What humility and subjection does it imply! It is the worship of one whose heart has been subdued by divine grace.—*W. Wilson*.

Verse 5.—Bishop Horsley thus renders this verse:—

"Exalt ye Jehovah our God,
And make prostration before his footstool;
It is holy."

Thus he connects "holy" with Jehovah's footstool, mentioned in the preceding clause. There appears to me great propriety and beauty in this construction, which divides the poem into three members. Of these the first terminates with ascribing "holiness" to the name of Jehovah: the second, with ascribing the same property to his *abode*: and then, at the conclusion of the hymn, "holiness," essential holiness, is ascribed to Jehovah himself. Our Bible marginal translation recognises this construction of the 5th verse.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 6.—"Moses and Aaron among his priests," or chief officers, as in 1 Chron. xviii. 17. Moses was, if not a priest, yet a continual intercessor for the people, and a type of Christ the great Mediator of his church. *Aben-Ezra* called him *Cohen haccohanim*, the priest of priests; and *Philo*, writing his life, concludeth, This was the life and death of Moses the king, the lawgiver, the prophet, and the chief priest.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—Moses twice performed acts essentially priestly (Ex. xxiv. and xl. 22, compared with Leviticus viii.), at the ratification of the covenant, and at the consecration of the priests. For this reason he could the more readily be placed here among the priestly mediators.—*C. B. Moll.*

Verse 6.—"Priests." The word *cohen* is not confined as a title to the priests of the Levitical order, it is applied to Melchizedek and others. Moses is included among God's priests in accordance with the true idea of a priest, as being the official exponent of the divine love and mercy—one who represented God though acting in the interests of man.—*Robert Baker Girdlestone*, in "*Synonyms of the Old Testament.*"

Verse 6.—"His priests." At the foundation of this there is another spiritual idiom, that, namely, according to which all are called priests who possess what constitutes the essence of the ordinary priestly office (although not the externals), inward connection with God, free access to the throne of grace, and the gift and power of intercessory prayer. This figurative idiom occurs even in the law itself, compare Exodus xix. 6, where it is said to all Israel, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—*Priests.* The word *cohen*, Priest, is from *cahan*, to plead a cause, as an intercessor, mediator, or advocate; hence the strict propriety of its use here in reference to Moses.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"Them that call upon his name." The Hebrew word which we translate to call upon God, notes a sort of men whose chief business or trade was to call upon or invoke the name of God, and in this instance it implies that it was the special calling of these men to call upon God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 6-9.—This third strophe is in reality a prophetic picture of the future holy worship of God, in which Moses, Aaron, and Samuel appear as the living representatives of the redeemed church, like the four and twenty elders in the more fully developed Apocalyptic scene of St. John. Rev. v.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7.—"They kept his testimonies." For this reason they were so promptly heard, even as the Lord himself says, "If a man love me he will keep my words," and again, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "And the ordinance that he gave them." They not only observed the precepts which bind men in general, but the peculiar obligation of governing, directing, and teaching the people committed to them.—*Bellarmino.*

Verse 8.—The construction of the verse seems to be this:—"O Lord our God, thou didst hear or answer them," that is, the aforementioned typical mediators, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; "thou becamest a forbearing God for them," or, at their intercession; and that "even when punishing," or, when thou hadst begun to punish "the wicked deeds of them," that is, not of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but of the people, who had transgressed, and for whom they interceded. This was the case when Moses interceded for the idolaters, Exod. xxii. 32, Aaron for the schismatics, Numb. xvi. 47, and Samuel for the whole nation, 1 Sam. vii. 9.—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—"Thou answeredst them . . . forgavest them." Oh, the blessed assurance that nothing can disturb our standing in the covenant. Answer and forgiveness are certain, though vengeance is taken of our inventions. How every word and expression here seems to go right to our hearts! The very designation of our sins and punish-

ments is so true. Yet, withal, we are not shut out from God. We are able to speak to, and to hear him; we receive what we need, and much more; and, above all, we have the sweet, abiding sense of forgiveness, notwithstanding "our inventions." When we smart under chastisements or disappointments, we know that it is the fire which burns up the hay, wood, and stubble—a Father's dealings in compassion and mercy. We willingly, we gladly take these chastisements, which now are to us fresh pledges of our safety. For safe, eternally safe, remains the foundation, and unclosed the way of access. O surely with all our heart do we accord: "*Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his holy hill; for Jehovah our God is holy.*"—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 8.—The words of this verse have in them three remarkable particulars. I. The behaviour of the men it speaks of, which is partly good, and partly evil. The former verse saith, "*They kept God's testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them;*" this insinuates (what was also expressed, ver. 6) that they used to call upon God; all this was very good. But withal they did sometimes some things amiss, they had some inventions, by-paths, and steps awry, which, as they needed pardon, so they occasionally incensed him so much against them that he would not let them escape altogether, without taking some vengeance for such untowardness. II. God's graciousness in a double respect: 1, in answering them, granting their suits and supplications ordinarily. 2. In forgiving them, pardoning their failings and faults evermore; never dealing with them altogether according to their sins, but in the midst of any offence of theirs, or judgment of his, remembering mercy. III. His holy justice, notwithstanding, taking vengeance on their inventions; chastening them for some faults sometimes, and not letting them always go unpunished, how faithful soever they were generally, or how gracious soever he was eternally.—*Herbert Palmer (1601—1647), in a Sermon entitled "The Glass of God's Providence." 1644.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou wast a God that forgavest them,*" literally "for them;" on account of their intercessions. God did not destroy those for whom his devoted servants pleaded, in the day of threatened vengeance. Their sins, indeed, he visited with the rod of divine chastisement; but their forfeited lives he spared in answer to prayer.—*John Morison.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou . . . forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" Because he loves the person, and hates only the sin; therefore he preserves the one, destroys only the other. This is all the fruit, to take away his sin. The covenant that is made with us in Christ is not a covenant made with works, but with persons; and therefore, though the works be often hateful, yet he goes on to love the persons; and that he may continue to love them, destroys out of them what he hates, but cutteth not them off. A member that is leprous or ulcerous, a man loves it as it is "his own flesh," Eph. v. 29, though he loathes the corruption and putrefaction that is in it; and therefore he doth not presently cut it off, but purgeth it daily, lays plasters to it to eat the corruption out: whereas a wart or even a wen that grows to a man's body, a man gets it cut off, for he doth not reckon it as his flesh.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" It is not a light punishment, but a "vengeance," "he takes on their inventions;" to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him. But when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain, 2 Sam. vi. 7. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz., the death of Christ, Mat. xvi. 23. He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children, wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more for being in the bed with the most precious flowers.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou tookest vengeance.*" Sometimes the sins of a people may be such, that God will not pardon them as to temporal punishments; nay, not the godly themselves. Even they may have been partakers with others in their sins, or may have so provoked God themselves, and sinned in such a way as to cause

his name to be blasphemed; so that he is concerned in honour to bring some exemplary punishment upon them. So it was with David (2 Sam. xii.): though he pardoned him as to the guilt of eternal death, saved his soul, and spared his life, which was forfeited to divine justice for the murder of Uriah; yet the prophet announced that sharp afflictions must come on him, the sword must never "depart from his house," and the child begotten in adultery must die, and his wives must be given to his neighbours. So, in Psalm xcix. 8, it seems to be spoken of Moses himself, and other godly among the Israelites who died in the wilderness, and were not permitted to come into the land of promise, that "*God forgave them,*" yet "*took vengeance of their inventions.*"—*John Collins* (—1687) in the *Morning Exercises*.

Verse 8.—"Vengeance of their inventions." It is remarkable, that in the preceding verses mention is made of Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel in a way which seems to imply that they were upon the Psalmist's mind when he uttered the declaration of the text. These three persons, all eminent for their piety, were also conspicuous for having suffered the Divine displeasure on account of their failings. Moses angered the Lord at the waters of strife, and he is not suffered to enter the promised land; Aaron provoked the Divine anger by making the golden calf, and would have been destroyed, had not Moses by fervent intercession turned away the anger of the Lord lest he should destroy him; so Samuel placed his sons over Israel, who walked not in his ways, and therefore God gave Israel a king, whose crimes caused the prophet to go down with sorrow to the grave.—*Stephen Bridge*, 1852.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The doctrine of divine sovereignty enunciated. II. The apprehension of divine sovereignty demanded. It ought to be *spiritually* apprehended. God wants to be King in the *hearts* of men. All mortals must tremble before the Immortal; especially the wicked. III. The accessories of divine sovereignty hinted at. Sovereignty never forsakes the mercy-seat. Angels are represented on the mercy-seat, the ministers of sovereignty. IV. The effect of divine sovereignty described. Men should be "moved" to fear and obey the King before whom angels bow. Men should be moved to seek the mercy which angels study.—*William Durban*.

Verse 1.—"He sitteth between the cherubims," etc. I. Statement made; where God dwells, on the mercy seat. To hear prayer, and confession, and to grant salvation. II. Effect produced—"Earth moved;" to admiration, to prayer, to sorrowful contrition, to draw near, etc.—*E. G. Gange*.

Verse 2.—I. God is great in Zion *in himself*, all his perfections are here, which cannot be said of creation, or of his Law, or of the heaven of angels. II. Great in his works of *saving* sinners which he cannot do elsewhere. III. Great in his glory as displayed in *redemption* through his Son. IV. Great in his *love* to his redeemed.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—"The Lord is great in Zion." I. In the condescension he displays—Zion is his "habitation," his "rest." II. In the glory he manifests—power and glory are in the sanctuary, Ps. lxxiii. 2. III. In the assemblage he draws. "Every one in Zion appeareth before God," Ps. lxxxiv. 7. IV. In the blessings he imparts. V. In the authority he exerts.—*W. Jackson*.

Verse 3.—The terrors of the Lord, connected with holiness, and worthy of praise.

Verse 4.—I. Trace the process of the working of right principles through three stages—Love, Establishment, Execution. II. Illustrate from God's character and action. III. Apply to national, and to daily, life.—*C. D.*

Verse 5.—"Exalt the Lord your God." I. Why? For what he is to you. For what he has done for you. For what he has told you. II. How? In your affection. In your meditation. In your supplication. In your conversation. In your profession. In your consecration. In your co-operation. In your expectation.—*W. J.*

Verse 5.—I. The loyal enthusiasm of worship, it exalts the Lord. II. The humble diffidence of worship not aspiring to his exaltation, it kneels at his footstool. III. The good reason for worship.—"He is holy."—*C. D.*

Verses 6, 7.—I. Prayer offered. Moses the prophet, Aaron the priest, Samuel

the ruler, "They called," &c. II. Prayer answered. "He answered them," "he spake," &c. III. Prayer vindicated. They kept the other testimonies, &c.—*G. R.*

Verse 7 (first clause).—The revelation of the cloud, or what God foreshadowed to Israel in the cloudy pillar. 1. That God was willing to commune with man. 2. That sinful man could not see God and live. 3. That God should become incarnate, veiled in flesh as in the cloud. 4. That he should be their shelter, protector, guide. 5. That God manifest in the flesh should lead them to the Promised Land—Heaven.—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Mercy and judgment, or the sea of glass mingled with fire.—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Observe, I. That God's vengeance for sin does not prevent his forgiveness of sin; and, II. That God's forgiveness of sin does not prevent his taking vengeance.—*Stephen Bridge.*

Verse 9.—"The Lord our God." A very sweet topic will be found in the consideration of the questions, "In what respect is Jehovah ours? and in what relations does he stand to his people?"
