

to in Luke 1. "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who has visited and redeemed his people;" and subsequently, same chapter, "The orient from on high hath visited us." Such visitation could not but elicit, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

5. "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor." This verse has a double meaning, a literal and an allegorical. In the literal sense, three favors of God to the human race are enumerated. First, being created by God of so noble a nature as to be very little less than that of the angels. Secondly, to be so distinguished in honor and glory beyond all other creatures, inasmuch as he has been made to the image and likeness of God, and endowed with reason and free will. Thirdly, from the power and dominion over all things, especially animals, that have been conferred by God upon him; and therefore, he adds:

6. "And hast set him over the works of thy hands."

7. "Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen: moreover the beasts also of the fields."

8. "The birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea." By sheep and oxen are meant all domestic animals: by the beasts of the field are meant wild animals. The birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, are easily understood, including the monsters as well as the fish of the sea. To come now to the allegorical sense of the preceding verses, which is quite certain, and intended by God, if we believe Saint Paul, in Heb. 2, and 1 Cor. 15, the meaning is that Christ, man, by that most remarkable visitation of God; that is to say, by the incarnation of the Word, was made less than the angels in some degree, by his passion, as would appear from the angels coming to comfort him in his passion, whereas angels are immortal, and exempt from all suffering; and however, Christ suffered and died then and there. Absolutely speaking, however, Christ was always superior to the angels, and superior in every respect. That was shown clearly, when he "was crowned with honor and glory;" that is to say, when in his Resurrection in a glorious and immortal body, and by his wonderful ascension to the right hand of his Father, he was exalted above all God's works. All things are subject to him, without exception, "except him" as the apostle, 1Cor. 15, says, "Who has subjected everything to him." His principal subjects are, first human beings, believers, included in "sheep and oxen," subjects and prelates; and unbelievers, under the head of "beasts of the field." Then angels, superior to mankind, come under the head of the birds of the air, that rise aloft, and constantly chant the praises of God. Finally, the fishes of the sea represent the evil spirits, who, from the lowest abyss are insensible to God's praise, and revel in the meanest and lowest dissipation.

9. "O Lord our Lord, how admirable is thy name in all the earth." A repetition of the first verse, as if he said: How justly I set out with the exclamation, "O Lord our Lord, how admirable is thy name in all the earth."

*END OF PSALM 8*

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## PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST  
IN THE  
LORD *and do good;*  
*dwell in the land and*  
*enjoy safe pasture.*  
PSALM 36: 3

### PSALM NUMBER: 8

*God is wonderful in his works; especially in mankind,  
singularly exalted by the incarnation of Christ.*

1. O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth! For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens.
2. Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise, because of thy enemies, that thou mayst destroy the enemy and the avenger.
3. For I will behold thy heavens, the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast founded.
4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him?
5. Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor:
6. And has set him over the works of thy hands.
7. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen: moreover the beasts also of the fields.
8. The birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea.
9. O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in all the earth!

*The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.*

## PSALM NUMBER: 8

### Explanation of the Psalm

1. "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth! For the magnificence is elevated above the heavens." Reflecting on God's greatness, the prophet is wrapped in admiration at the idea of a God, so great in himself, condescending to look upon or to heap such and so many favors on man, a thing of dust and ashes. "O Lord," says he, who art the source of all being, whence all created things are derived; and therefore, "Our Lord," that is to say, thou art Lord of all, "how admirable is thy name in the whole earth!" how wonderful is thy glory; or the good fame of thy name diffused through the whole world, to the great admiration of all who care to reflect on it. Isaias 6 says the same in other language: "The whole earth is full of his glory." He calls the name of God admirable, because though the admirers may be few, when few reflect on God's works; however, the name is most worthy of admiration when all creatures constantly praise the Creator in the sense that all beautiful productions are said to praise the producer, and in such wise the whole earth is full of the glory of God; for whatever is on earth, even to the minutest particle, declares the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator. "For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens." A reason why God's name should be so admirable on earth, inasmuch as his magnificence is elevated above the heavens, that is, cannot be contained by them; it is such that the whole world cannot contain it. "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise," Hab. 3. The magnificence of great princes is estimated from their expensive manner of living, their building great cities or palaces, their keeping up great retinues or armies, or their distribution of great presents. God created the universe for a palace, having the earth for its pavement, the heavens for its roof. He feeds all living things, who are beyond counting. He has already bestowed on the angels and saints, who are the most numerous, and will hereafter bestow on the just, a most ample kingdom, not temporal but eternal. Truly great, then, is his magnificence.

2. "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise, because of thy enemies, that thou mayest destroy the enemy and the avenger." An answer to an objection likely to be raised. If the glory of God so fill the earth and his magnificence be elevated above the heavens, how comes it that all do not know and praise him? The answer is, that God does not condescend to be known or praise by the proud, who presume on their own strength, but by the humble and the little ones, according to Matt. 11, "I confess to thee, Father, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and has revealed them to the little

ones." Hence, God's glory and greatness are greatly increased, when he is known only by those he wishes should know him. This verse may have a double meaning. First, to understand infants and sucklings as meaning who mankind, who really are such, when compared to the angels, when there is question of understanding divine matters. The sense would be from the mouth of mortals you have perfected praise, revealing your glory to them, because of thy enemies;" that is, to confound the rebellious angels. "That thou mayest destroy the enemy and the avenger," that is, that you may outwit the wisdom of your primary enemy, the devil, and his defenders, or avenges, the host of his followers, the reprobate angels. Secondly, by "infants and sucklings," may be understood humble people, little ones in their own eyes, and not versed in the science of the world; like many of the prophets and apostles, and a great number of monks, and holy virgins, and mere children too, who, in early years, have so perfectly understood the glory of God, that they had no hesitation in spilling their blood for it. In such sense did our Savior quote this very Psalm, Matt. 21, "Have you never read that from the mouth of infants and sucklings he hath perfected praise?" By enemies are meant the wise ones of this world, and their apologists, who, with all their knowledge of God, have not glorified him as such, and, therefore, "became vain in their thoughts," as Saint Paul expresses it.

3. "For I will behold the heavens, he work of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast founded." Holy David ranks himself here among the infants and sucklings praising God; as if he were to say, here is one, a humble shepherd, to chant your praise. "For I will behold the heavens;" that is, I will attentively consider that wonderful work of yours, and praise you, the Creator of such a work. He makes use of the phrase, "the works of thy fingers;" as much as to say, formed by your fingers, not by your arms, to show with what facility they were created by God; and furthermore, that valuable and precious works, not requiring labor but skill, are generally the work of the fingers and not of the arms. Mention is not made of the sun here, for it was mostly night that David would so turn to contemplation; that being the time most meet for it. "At midnight I rose to confess to thee," Psalm 118; and in Psalm 62, "I will meditate on thee in the morning;" and Isaias 26: "My soul hath longed for thee in the night." It is at night that the heavens are seen embellished with the moon and stars, "Which thou hast founded;" all created from nothing, raised by you from the foundation without having had any previous existence.

4. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him?" The greatness of God, in himself, having been established, he now proceeds to extol his greatness towards man. "What is man," that you, the Creator of heaven and earth, deign to remember him? As if he said the greatest favor possible to be conferred on man, who is mere dust and ashes, is the bare remembrance of him by God; and as such remembrance is not a naked one, but with a view to confer favors on man, he adds, by way of explanation, "or the son of man that thou visitest him?" Man, and the son of man, mean the same, unless one would raise an uncalled for distinction, by saying that the words, "son of man," are used to show the divine favors were not conferred on the first man to the exclusion of his posterity. The word "visitest him," implies the special providence God has for all men, especially that which he displayed, by coming into the world, assuming human flesh, "being seen on earth, and conversing among men," Bar. 3. Such is, properly speaking, the visitation alluded