

PSALM C.

TITLE.—A Psalm of Praise; or rather of thanksgiving. *This is the only Psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favourite with the people of God ever since it was written. "Let us sing the Old Hundredth" is one of the everyday expressions of the Christian church, and will be so while men exist whose hearts are loyal to the Great King. Nothing can be more sublime this side heaven than the singing of this noble Psalm by a vast congregation. Watts' paraphrase, beginning "Before Jehovah's awful throne," and the Scolch "All people that on earth do dwell," are both noble versions; and even Tate and Brady rise beyond themselves when they sing—*

*"With one consent let all the earth
To God their cheerful voices raise."*

In this divine lyric we sing with gladness the creating power and goodness of the Lord, even as before with trembling we adored his holiness.

EXPOSITION.

MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: *it is* he *that* hath made us and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

1. "*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.*" This is a repetition of the fourth verse of Psalm xcvi. The original word signifies a glad shout, such as loyal subjects give when their king appears among them. Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature, his acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for his mercies. In every land Jehovah's goodness is seen, therefore in every land should he be praised. Never will the world be in its proper condition till with one unanimous shout it adores the only God. O ye nations, how long will ye blindly reject him? Your golden age will never arrive till ye with all your hearts revere him.

2. "*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" "Glad homage pay with awful mirth." He is our Lord, and therefore he is to be served; he is our gracious Lord, and therefore to be served with joy. The invitation to worship here given is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery, gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to a marriage feast. "*Come before his presence with singing.*" We ought in worship to realise the presence of God, and by an effort of the mind to approach him. This is an act which must to every rightly instructed heart be one of great solemnity, but at the same time it must not be performed in the servility of fear, and therefore we come before him, not with weepings and wailings, but with Psalms and hymns. Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration. How a certain society of brethren can find it in their hearts to forbid singing in public worship is a riddle which we cannot solve. We feel inclined to say with Dr. Watts—

*"Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God;
But favourites of the heavenly king
Must speak his praise abroad"*

3. "*Know that the Lord he is God.*" Our worship must be intelligent. We ought to know whom we worship and why. "Man, know thyself," is a wise aphorism, yet to know our God is truer wisdom; and it is very questionable whether a man can know himself until he knows his God. Jehovah is God in the fullest, most absolute, and most exclusive sense, he is God alone; to know him in that character and prove our knowledge by obedience, trust, submission, zeal, and love is an attainment which only grace can bestow. Only those who practically recognise his Godhead are at all likely to offer acceptable praise. "*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" Shall not the creature reverence its Maker? Some men live as if they made themselves; they call themselves "self-made men," and they adore their supposed creators; but Christians recognise the origin of their being and their well-being, and take no honour to themselves either for being, or for being what they are. Neither in our first or second creation dare we put so much as a finger upon the glory, for it is the sole right and property of the Almighty. To disclaim honour for ourselves is as necessary a part of true reverence as to ascribe glory to the Lord. "Non nobis, domine!" will for ever remain the true believer's confession. Of late philosophy has laboured hard to prove that all things have been developed from atoms, or have, in other words, made themselves: if this theory shall ever find believers, there will certainly remain no reason for accusing the superstitious of credulity, for the amount of credence necessary to accept this dogma of scepticism is a thousandfold greater than that which is required even by an absurd belief in winking Madonnas, and smiling Bambinos. For our part, we find it far more easy to believe that the Lord made us than that we were developed by a long chain of natural selections from floating atoms which fashioned themselves. "*We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*" It is our honour to have been chosen from all the world besides to be his own people, and our privilege to be therefore guided by his wisdom, tended by his care, and fed by his bounty. Sheep gather around their shepherd and look up to him; in the same manner let us gather around the great Shepherd of mankind. The avowal of our relation to God is in itself praise; when we recount his goodness we are rendering to him the best adoration; our songs require none of the inventions of fictions, the bare facts are enough; the simple narration of the mercies of the Lord is more astonishing than the productions of imagination. That we are the sheep of his pasture is a plain truth, and at the same time the very essence of poetry.

4. "*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.*" To the occurrence of the word *thanksgiving* in this place the Psalm probably owes its title. In all our public service the rendering of thanks must abound; it is like the incense of the temple, which filled the whole house with smoke. Expiatory sacrifices are ended, but those of gratitude will never be out of date. So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks. Mercy permits us to enter his gates; let us praise that mercy. What better subject for our thoughts in God's own house than the Lord of the house. "*And into his courts with praise.*" Into whatever court of the Lord you may enter, let your admission be the subject of praise: thanks be to God, the innermost court is now open to believers, and we enter into that which is within the veil; it is incumbent upon us that we acknowledge the high privilege by our songs. "*Be thankful unto him.*" Let the praise be in your heart as well as on your tongue, and let it all be for him to whom it all belongs. "*And bless his name.*" He blessed you, bless him in return; bless his name, his character, his person. Whatever he does, be sure that you bless him for it: bless him when he takes away as well as when he gives; bless him as long as you live, under all circumstances; bless him in all his attributes, from whatever point of view you consider him.

5. "*For the Lord is good.*" This sums up his character and contains a mass of reasons for praise. He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving; yea, God is love. He who does not praise the good is not good himself. The kind of praise inculcated in the Psalm, viz. that of joy and gladness, is most fitly urged upon us by an argument from the goodness of God. "*His mercy is everlasting.*" God is not mere justice, stern and cold: he has bowels of compassion, and wills not the sinner's death. Towards his own people mercy is still more conspicuously displayed; it has been theirs from all eternity, and shall be theirs world without end. Everlasting mercy is a glorious theme for sacred song. "*And his truth endureth to all generations.*" No fickle being is he, promising and forgetting. He has entered into covenant with his people, and he will never revoke it, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips. As our fathers found him faithful, so will our sons, and

their seed for ever. A changeable God would be a terror to the righteous, they would have no sure anchorage, and amid a changing world they would be driven to and fro in perpetual fear of shipwreck. It were well if the truth of divine faithfulness were more fully remembered by some theologians; it would overturn their belief in the final fall of believers, and teach them a more consolatory system. Our heart leaps for joy as we bow before One who has never broken his word or changed his purpose.

"As well might he his being quit
As break his promise or forget."

Resting on his sure word, we feel that joy which is here commanded, and in the strength of it we come into his presence even now, and speak good of his name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—This is the only Psalm in the whole collection entitled "A Psalm of Praise." It is supposed to have received this appellation because peculiarly adapted, and not designed to be sung, when the *sacrifices of thanksgiving* were offered. See Lev. vii. 12. The Greeks think it was written by David, who here invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of God, whose divine sovereignty he here recognises.—*Samuel Burder.*

Whole Psalm.—If we are right in regarding Psalms xciii.—xcix. as forming one continuous series, one great prophetic oratorio, whose title is "Jehovah is King," and through which there runs the same great idea, this Psalm may be regarded as the doxology which closes the strain. We find lingering in it notes of the same great harmony. It breathes the same gladness; it is filled with the same hope, that all nations shall bow down before Jehovah, and confess that he is God.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm contains a promise of Christianity, as winter at its close contains the promise of spring. The trees are ready to bud, the flowers are just hidden by the light soil, the clouds are heavy with rain, the sun shines in his strength; only a genial wind from the south is wanted to give a new life to all things.—"The Speaker's Commentary," 1873.

Whole Psalm.—Luther would have immortalized his name had he done no more than written the majestic air and harmony to which we are accustomed to sing this Psalm, and which, when the mind is in a truly worshipping frame, seems to bring heaven down to earth, and to raise earth to heaven, giving us anticipations of the pure and sublime delights of that noble and general assembly in which saints and angels shall for ever celebrate the praises of God.—*Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 2.—The first half of this verse is from Psalm ii. 11, only that instead of "with fear," there, where the Psalmist has to do with fierce rebels, there is substituted here "gladness" or joy.—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"Serve the Lord with gladness." It is a sign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart "when the oil of gladness" shines on the countenance. Cheerfulness credits religion.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"Serve the Lord." It is our privilege to serve the Lord in all things. It is ours to please the Lord in loosing the latchet of a shoe; and to enjoy the expression of his favour therein. The servant of God is not serving at the same time another master; he has not been hired for occasional service; he abides in the service of his God, and cannot be about anything but his Master's business; he eats, he drinks, he sleeps, he walks, he discourses, he findeth recreation, all by the way of serving God. "Serve the Lord with gladness." Can you bear to be waited upon by a servant who goes moping and dejected to his every task? You would rather have no servant at all, than one who evidently finds your service cheerless and irksome.—*George Bowen.*

Verse 3.—"Know ye that the Lord he is God," &c. From the reasons of this

exhortation, learn, that such is our natural atheism, that we have need again and again to be instructed, *that the Lord is God*; of whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—“*It is he that made us . . . we are his.*” Now, the ground of God’s property in all things is his creating of all. . . . Accordingly, you may observe in many scriptures, where the Lord’s propriety is asserted, this, as the ground of it, is annexed: Ps. lxxxix. 11, 12, the heavens, the earth, the whole world, and all therein is thine. Why so? “*Thou hast founded them.*” And so are all the regions and quarters of the world, northern and southern, western and eastern; for Tabor was on the west and Hermon on the east; all are thine, for thou hast created them. So sea and land, Ps. xc. 5. As all things measured by time, so time itself, the measure of all, Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17. “*Thou hast made the light,*” *i.e.* the moon for the night and the sun for the day. He lays claim to all the climes of the earth, and all the seasons of the year, on this account; he made them. This will be more evident and unquestionable, if we take notice of these particulars:—

1. He made all for himself. He was not employed by any to make it for another, for in that case sometimes the maker is not the owner; but the Lord did employ himself in that great work, and for himself did he undertake and finish it. Prov. xvi. 4, Col. i. 15, 16.

2. He made all things of nothing, either without any matter at all, or without any but what himself had before made of nothing. A potter when he makes an earthenware vessel, if the clay be not his own which he makes it of, he is not the full owner of the vessel, though he formed it: “*the form is his, the matter is another’s;*” but since the Lord made all of nothing, or of such matter as himself had made, all is wholly his, matter and form, all entirely.

3. He made all without the help or concurrence of any other. There was none that assisted him, or did in the least co-operate with him in the work of creation. . . . Those that assist and concur with another in the making of a thing may claim a share in it; but here lies no such claim in this case, where the Lord alone did all, alone made all. All is his only.

4. He upholds all things in the same manner as he created, continues the being of all things in the same way as he gave it. He does it of himself, without other support, without any assistant. All would fall into nothing in a moment, if he did not every moment bear them up. So that all things on this account have still their being from him every moment, and their well-being too, and all the means which conduce to it; and therefore all are his own.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 3.—“*It is he that hath made us.*” The emperor Henry, while out hunting on the Lord’s day called Quinquagesima, his companions being scattered, came unattended to the entrance of a certain wood; and seeing a church hard by, he made for it, and feigning himself to be a soldier, simply requested a mass of the priest. Now that priest was a man of notable piety, but so deformed in person that he seemed a monster rather than a man. When he had attentively considered him, the emperor began to wonder exceedingly why God, from whom all beauty proceeds, should permit so deformed a man to administer his sacraments. But presently, when mass commenced, and they came to the passage, “*Know ye that the Lord he is God,*” which was chanted by a boy, the priest rebuked the boy for singing negligently, and said with a loud voice, “*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*” Struck by these words, and believing the priest to be a prophet, the emperor raised him, much against his will, to the archbishopric of Cologne, which see he adorned by his devotion and excellent virtues.—*From “Roger of Wendover’s (—1237) Flowers of History.”*

Verse 3.—“*It is he that hath made us . . . we are his.*” Many a one has drawn balsamic consolation from these words; as for instance Melancthon when disconsolately sorrowful over the body of his son in Dresden on the 12th July, 1559. But in “*He made us and we are his,*” there is also a rich mine of comfort and of admonition, for the Creator is also the Owner, his heart clings to his creature, and the creature owes itself entirely to him, without whom it would not have had a being, and would not continue in being.—*F. Delitzsch.*

Verse 3.—“*He that made us,*” *i.e.* made us what we are, a people to himself; as in Ps. xc. 5, 1 Sam. xii. 6, and Deut. xxxii. 6. It was not we that made ourselves his (compare Ezek. xxix. 3). “*He (and not we ourselves) made us his people, and the flock whom he feeds.*”—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 3.—“*Not we*” is added, because any share, on the part of the church,

in effecting the salvation bestowed upon her, would weaken the testimony which this bears to the exclusive Godhead of the Lord.—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verses 3, 5.—“*Know ye*” what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. “*Know*” it, *i.e.* consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know, then, these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

1. “*That the Lord he is God,*” the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being. 2. That he is our *Creator*: “*it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*” We do not, we could not make ourselves; it is God’s prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending. 3. That therefore *he is our rightful owner.* The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, “*He made us, and his we are,*” or, “*to him we belong.*” Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God “*made us, and not we ourselves,*” therefore we are not our own, but his. 4. That *he is our sovereign Ruler.* “*We are his people,*” or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives laws to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. 5. That *he is our bountiful Benefactor*; we are not only his sheep whom he is entitled to, but “*the sheep of his pasture,*” whom he takes care of. 6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and good (verse 5); “*The Lord is good,*” and therefore doth good; “*his mercy is everlasting.*” 7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness; “*His truth endureth to all generations,*” and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—“*Enter into his gates;*” for to the most guilty are the gates of his church open.—*Francis Hill Tucker.*

Verse 4.—“*With thanksgiving.*” On the word תָּרַח [the word used in Levit. vii. 12 for sacrifices of thankgivings], Rabbi Menachen remarks: All sacrifices will be abolished; but the sacrifice of thanksgiving will remain.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 4.—The former part of this Psalm may have been chanted by the precentor when the peace-offering was brought to the altar; and this last verse may have been the response, sung by the whole company of singers, at the moment when fire was applied to the offering.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 5.—“*His mercy is everlasting.*” The everlasting unchangeable mercy of God, is the first motive of our turning to him, and of our continuing steadfast in his covenant, and it shall be the subject of unceasing praise in eternity. As the Lord is good, and his mercy everlasting, so the full perfection of these attributes in a perfect state will call forth praise unwearied from hearts that never faint.—*W. Wilson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This is a bunch of the grapes of Eshcol. It is a taste of what is still the promised land. The Jewish church came to its perfection in the reign of Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here. The perfection of the New Testament church is here anticipated. This Psalm teaches, I. *That there will be a joyful state of the whole world* (verse 1). 1. To whom the address is given—to “*all lands,*” and all in those lands. 2. The subject of the address—“*Make a joyful noise.*” What a doleful noise it has made! 3. By whom the address is given, by him who secures what he commands. II. *That this joyful state of the whole world will arise from the enjoyment of the Divine Being* (verse 2). 1. Men have long tried to be happy without God. 2. They will find at last that their happiness is in God. The conversion of an individual in this respect is a type of the conversion of the world. III. *That this enjoyment of God will arise from a new relation to him* (verse 3). 1. Of knowledge on our part: he will be known as the Triune God, as a covenant God, as the God of salvation—as God. 2. Of rightful claim on his part; (1) by right of creation—“*He hath made us;*” (2) By right of redemption—“*Ye were not a people.*”

but are now the people of God," &c.; "I have redeemed thee; thou art mine" (3) by right of preservation—"We are the sheep," &c. IV. *That this new relation to God will endure to us the ordinances of his house* (verse 4). 1. Of what the service will consist—"thanksgiving" and praise. 2. To whom it will be rendered. Enter into his gates—his courts—be thankful unto him—bless his name. V. *That this service will be perpetual*; begun on earth, continued in heaven. This fact is founded—1. Upon essential goodness. "For the Lord is good." 2. Upon everlasting mercy. "His mercy," etc. 3. Upon immutable truth. "His truth," etc.—G. R.

Verse 2.—"Serve the Lord with gladness," 1. For he is the best of beings. 2. For his commandments are not grievous. 3. For he is your Saviour, as well as Creator; your friend, as well as Lord. 4. The angels, so much greater than yourself, know no reason why they should not serve him with gladness. 5. In serving him you serve yourself. 6. You make religion attractive. 7. You get fitness for heaven.—George Bowen.

Verse 2 (first clause).—A true heart, I. Is humble—serves. II. Is pious—"serve the Lord." III. Is active—serves. IV. Is consequently joyful—"with gladness."

Verse 2 (first clause).—"Serving the Lord with gladness." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 769.

Verse 3.—"Know ye that the Lord he is God." That you may be true amid superstition, hopeful in contrition, persistent in supplication, unwearied in exertion, calm in affliction, firm in temptation, bold in persecution, and happy in dissolution.—W. J.

Verse 3.—"We are his people." We have been twice born, as all his people are. We love the society of his people. We are looking unto Jesus like his people. We are separated from the world as his people. We experience the trials of his people. We prefer the employment of his people. We enjoy the privileges of his people.—W. J.

Verse 4.—A Discourse of Thankfulness which is due to God for his benefits and blessings.—A Sermon by Thomas Goodwin. Works, vol. ix., pp. 499—514. Nichol's edition.

Verse 4.—I. The privileges of access. II. The duty of thankfulness. III. The reasons for enjoying both.

Verse 5.—I. The inexhaustible fount—the goodness of God. II. The ever-flowing stream—the mercy of God. III. The fathomless ocean—the truth of God. "O the depths!"—W. Durban.