

as those only entered Canaan who meditated in God's law day and night, and were thus morally prepared to believe the divine testimony; so those only shall enter heaven who are possessed of "like precious faith," and who "hold fast the beginning of their confidence, steadfast unto the end."

We have many examples of this emblematic mode of presenting divine truth in the book of Psalms. Thus, in Psalm xxiii. 6, David says, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for length of days," that is, for ever. The Psalmist obviously intimates, that as water from the smitten rock followed the Israelites through the desert, till they took possession of Canaan, so nothing but goodness and mercy, like a continuing stream, had followed him through this desert world; and that he had the firm assurance of dwelling in the house of Jehovah—that house not made with hands, not for a day, but for ever—that house of which the temple, with its sacred furniture, was only a feeble representation. These emblems are fully explained in the clearer revelation of the New Testament. The Apostle tells us, that the spiritual Rock, whose waters followed the Israelites through the desert, was Christ, the Rock of Ages, from whose smitten side flows the water of life: that the Jewish tabernacle, with its furniture, were only patterns of things in the heavens, and that the most holy place was a figure of the true sanctuary, of heaven itself, into which Christ has entered with his own blood, to offer sacrifice and to make intercession.

Another remarkable historical allusion is contained in Psalm xxix. 10. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." The term translated "flood," is only applied to the destruction of the old world by a flood of waters. The Psalmist, therefore by employing this term, intimates that Jehovah then sat upon the flood in the dignity of calm repose, and in the consciousness of almighty strength, governing and restraining, and directing its most boisterous waves. Instead of putting forth a vigorous effort to produce and regulate so remarkable an event, he sits with perfect ease on the flood and directs its angry surges, and the proudest billows obey him as implicitly as a faithful subject does his sovereign. This creation originally sprang into existence by the word of his power; the Man of Sin shall be destroyed, not by a blow of his arm, but by the word of his mouth and by the brightness of his coming; and in the day of wrath, before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne, the heavens shall flee away. God's power is infinite, and therefore, the greatest results are produced by the smallest efforts.

2. In the Psalms, sacrificial language is employed to denote spiritual worship. The New Testament writers inform us, that the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law were only a "shadow of good things to come," the type, or dim outline, of a more perfect dispensation. The Psalmist has a distinct conception of the same truth; and, as if he stood among evangelists and apostles, he speaks of the sacrifice of righteousness and the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. Thus in Psalm v. 3, he says, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer to thee and look up." The phrase "I will direct," means to arrange, or place in order; and elsewhere denotes the laying or arranging the wood and victim on the altar, preparatory to sacrifice.—Every morning a lamb was sacrificed on the Jewish altar, and on extraordinary occasions, a spark of fire from the shekinah consumed it, as a token of the Divine approval; and in like manner would David present to God, every morning, the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart; and as the ceremonial worshipper looked up for a visible token of the divine regard, so would he look up for a gracious answer. The Apostle Paul has carried out this mode of representation to a still greater length, when he speaks of the believer himself as the sacrifice. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

God frequently testified his acceptance of sacrifice, under the law, by consuming it with fire from heaven. Hence Elijah proposed it as a well known test to the idolatrous priests of Baal: "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." And so reasonable did the proposal appear, that "all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." Now, in the Psalms, to accept a sacrifice is to turn it to ashes; as in Ps. xx. 3, "Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-offering;" or, as it is in

the margin of our Bibles, turn to ashes thy burnt sacrifice. Prayer is here the subject of discourse; and, therefore, by the metaphorical terms "offering," and "burnt-sacrifice," we are to understand prayer, combined with a request that God would hear our prayers and answer all our requests. Such a mode of representation is conceived exactly in the manner and spirit of the old Testament, and is parallel with the phrase used by Hosea, "the calves of our lips." Hosea xiv. 2, "So will we render the calves of our lips."

3. The leading characteristic of the Psalms is prayer and praise. This is the very first idea that they suggest to the mind; and on an accurate examination, we find in almost every Psalm, that the sacred writers uniformly blend prayer with praise, as they almost insensibly glide from the one to the other. And as the feelings and wants of believers are the same under every dispensation, they have been extensively used by the Church in the service of God. In the primitive Church, many could repeat from memory, the entire book of Psalms, and from its constant use in the praise of God, the ancient fathers quote it much more accurately than they do any other portion of scripture. These sacred hymns are still of inestimable value to the believer. We have here the most affecting views of the evil nature of sin, its native baseness, and the dishonour it has brought on the divine government. "Against thee, thee only," says David, "have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." The murder of Uriah, the injury done to Bathsheba, the withdrawing of the divine favor from himself, and the scandal brought on the Church, are all absorbed in the one consideration, that sin is rebellion against God, and that it is committed in his sight. When viewed aright, what infatuation is impiety! The presence of a little child is often sufficient to prevent the commission of any gross sin, and yet how frequently do we disregard an ever-present God, to whom the secrets of the heart are naked and bare! There is no darkness, or shadow of death, where his eye cannot reach us. And we should ever recollect that an object may bear the light of a torch, when it cannot stand in the light of the meridian sun; and that we may, in like manner, bear the scrutinizing gaze of our fellow-man, who can only look to the outward appearance, while we may be altogether unable to stand in the piercing glance of that God whose omniscient eye enables him to search the secrets of all hearts, in all times, and in all worlds. O thou prayer-answering God, "Hide thy face from my sins." Having obtained the pardon of sin and the assurance of the divine favor, the Psalmists, as a necessary consequence, repose the most implicit confidence in the providence of God, even in the most troublous times; and they see, as it were, a ray of future glory tingling the dark clouds that are closing round our world. Believers still continue, through these Psalms, to express their feelings and hopes and triumphs; and hence the hymn which Luther composed and sung in adversity—"A strong city is our God"—is closely modelled on the 46th Psalm, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Praise generally precedes prayer, and is frequently intermingled with it. The reason of this is obvious: "The Giver," says Hengstenberg, "will be more disposed to bestow new gifts when he sees that those already conferred are kept in grateful recollection. A *spirit of thankfulness* is one of the marks by which the family of God is distinguished from that of the world. He who cannot from the heart *give thanks*, shall *beg in vain*." Besides, praise is a nobler exercise than prayer.—In heaven there shall be no prayer, for there shall be no sense of need, and no sins to be forgiven. But all shall be praise, for all shall be enjoyment and triumph; and whatever may be the feeling, praise, eternal praise shall be its expression. Now, in the Psalms, there are far more words descriptive of praise than of sorrow—words which frequently rise above each other in a climax—as if to show that human language is too feeble to express the pent up emotions of the renewed heart. "I will praise thee, O Lord," says David, "with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works; I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High." It is also a remarkable circumstance, that whenever a Psalm commences in deep sorrow, it uniformly ends in a burst of triumph, showing, that though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning. The 13th Psalm commences in the deepest despondency, and yet at its close David says, "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."

* Hengstenberg on the 9th Psalm. Fairbairn's translation.