

THE  
**BOOK OF HOSEA.**

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

**T**HE word of God, in the prophetic part of it, hath been committed for writing by GOD the HOLY GHOST, to various penmen. *Hosea* is the first, in point of order, as placed in our present Bibles, of what is called the *twelve minor Prophets*. Not minor Prophets, because the writings of those holy men were less inspired, or less important, than the others which are placed in the word of God before them; but on account of their smallness in point of bulk. Some of the ancients put the whole in one book, and hence, perhaps, in the speech of *Stephen* before the council, (Acts vii. 42.) he quotes a passage, and calls it as *written in the Book of the Prophets*.

The name of *Hosea*, is of the same import as that of *Joshua*, and signifies a saviour. The Jews were remarkable for calling their children by names very expressive of somewhat great and good. *Hosea* ministered in the Church about eight hundred years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; consequently, though placed after the whole *four*, of what is called the *greater Prophets*, he lived before all of them; and delivered his prophecy before all of them. Notwithstanding this, several of those prophetic writings, which are placed after *Hosea*, were written before his: *Joel*, *Amos*, and *Jonah*, were all prior to *Hosea*. However, it is not of so much moment to know the exact order in which are placed those holy men of God; as it is to know, that they all wrote, as well as spake, *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.

It is blessed to observe, in confirmation of the faith, how the servants of the Lord correspond in word and doctrine. If the Reader will compare the writings of *Jeremiah*, who exercised his ministry long after *Hosea*, with the writings of *Hosea*, he will observe in several instances their agreement. *Jeremiah* vii. 34. with *Hosea* ii. 11. So again, *Ezekiel* xvi. 15—19. compared with *Hosea* ii. 8, 9. And the New Testament Writers, yea, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, confirms the divine authority of the prophecy of *Hosea*, by quotations from it. *Matt.* xi. 13. *Romans* ix. 25, 26. *Matt.* ii. 15. *1 Peter* ii. 10.

The chief scope and tendency of *Hosea's* writings, seems to be directed towards preparing the minds of the people to be on the look out for the coming Saviour. Acting under

the mission of the Holy Ghost, the Prophet is reproving the people of God for sin, and at the same time directing their minds to him who came *to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader any further, by general observations on *Hosea's* prophecy, but immediately to enter upon the book itself, first previously desiring the Lord the Spirit, to lead both Writer and Reader by the hand, through every part of it, that we may discover the mind of the Lord in the same, and *know the things which are freely given to us of God*.

## CHAP. I.

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*The prophecy opens with an account of the Prophet himself, and the period in which he ministered to the Church. The Prophet becomes a Type, as well as a Preacher, in the Church of God.*

**T**HE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea the son of Beer, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

This is the preface to what follows. It is the Lord's word, and therefore worthy of the greatest attention. And the time of the Prophets ministry is also mentioned. Hosea laboured long in the word and doctrine. For if it be calculated, only the time of his ministry, supposing only from the last year of *Uzziah*, to the first year of *Hezekiah*, this included a period of near seventy years: so that if Hosea began his prophetic character even at the age of twenty, he must have lived to between ninety and an hundred years.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD.

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived and bare him a son.

4 ¶ And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel: for yet a little *while*, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel,

5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

Some have thought, that what is here said of *Hosea*, was in vision, and not in reality. But others have deemed it to be literally as is here stated. In either sense, the doctrine is the same. God intended to shew thereby the divorcement of his people. The name of *Gomer* is very expressive, meaning *waste*. God's Israel are threatened to be wasted and scattered. And *Jezreel* is to the same amount, meaning scattered. Reader! while we read these scriptures, and behold in the day in which we live their fulfillment; is it not sweet to recollect the promise, *He that scattered Israel will gather him*. Jeremiah xxxi. 10. Gen. xlix. 10. John xi. 52.

6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter; and God said unto him, Call her name, Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

Perhaps the birth of a son first, and a daughter after, was intended to signify that both sons and daughters had alike corrupted themselves. *Ruhamah* is a beautiful name signifying *beloved*: but the *Lo* before it, putting a negative upon it, shews the solemn alteration wrought by sin in the human mind. But, Reader! do not overlook the gracious promise that follows, and the way by which the Lord engageth to accomplish it. The salvation promised is wholly by the Lord their God. Sweet thought! It is all in Jesus, *for there is salvation in no other*. Hosea xiii. 9. Acts iv. 12.

8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bare a son.

9 Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land, for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel.

We have here a further illustration of the doctrine. Israel had forfeited all pretensions to their covenant interest in Jehovah; and if it be preserved, it is not because of their deservings, but on account of the divine mercy. And how sweet and full are the promises that follow. And that they are all founded in Christ, the smallest attention to the Gospel will confirm. The Holy Ghost, as if that no mistakes might arise on that ground, appointed two of his servants to tell the Church as much. See Romans ix. 25, 26. 1 Peter ii. 10. I admire the strength of the expression *Lo ammi*; for here as before, when the *Lo* is taken away, (and it is only added now to express the ruined state of Israel, while breaking God's covenant) the *ammi* still remains, which signifies *my people*. And how blessed this is done, the last verse of the Chapter fully proves. Both Israel and Judah shall then be formed in one, and all gathered to our glorious *Shiloh*, the head and husband of his body the Church, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*. Ephes. i. 23.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! We may truly say, with one of the Sacred Writers, in reference to the Church in her latter-day glory; *glorious things are spoken of thee thou city of God!* For to behold, as this Chapter relates, the low and impoverished state of the Church; and God putting away, as it were, his people, and yet recovering them by the riches and sovereignty of his grace, all of himself, and from himself, and his own purpose, counsel, and will; surely we are constrained to exclaim, *what hath God wrought?*

Reader! is it so, that we are by nature, and by practice, like the children of whoredoms, and richly deserve to be for ever called, *Lo ruhamah*, and *Lo ammi*; but yet by the infinite grace of adoption, brought into acceptance by Christ, our spiritual Head? Is it in Jesus, and by Jesus, the one glorious Head of his body the Church, the whole of Judah and Israel are gathered; and when not a people are made the sons of the living God; oh! for grace to admire and adore these high privileges, and ascribe all the glory, and the praise, to whom alone it is all due. Precious Jesus! let my soul henceforth be for ever eyeing thee, as the cause, the whole means, the whole end. Earnestly as my soul desires to love thee, let not my love to thee be made any more the standard of my safety in thee, but let me consider thy love as the whole sum and substance of all my safety and my joy. Oh! for grace to know *the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge*. In heaven itself, the full and clear apprehension of thy love, constitutes the chief happiness of the place. Give me then, dearest Lord, by thy Spirit, *to be able to comprehend with all saints, the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of thy love, that I may be filled with all the fulness of God!*

## CHAP. II.

## CONTENTS.

*We have here a most interesting Chapter, describing the Lord's gracious dealings with his people, in bringing them from a state of sin to salvation.*

**S**AY ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.

I beg the Reader to observe, how soon the change is made from the foregoing Chapter. The *Lo*, the *not* is taken off; and the Lord calls his people again *Ammi*, and *Ruhamah*, beloved. And Reader! pray observe the cause. They are called *Brethren*. Yes! Jesus is not ashamed to call them so. Heb. ii. 11. And the Church glories in it. Song viii. 1. Oh! how gracious!

2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither *am* I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts.

3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they *be* the children of whoredoms.

But yet remember how the Lord pleads with his people under their rebellions. Here the whole Church is represented as our mother; and called in to hear of her backslidings; that when Christ was married to her she should run after her lovers. There is somewhat uncommonly gracious, and blessed, in this view of Jesus marrying our nature, by uniting that nature to the Godhead. And of all subjects of endearment, surely this is the highest, and the best. Reader! I know not what *your* feelings are on this subject; but to *my* view, I know of no encouragements to lead my poor sinful soul to the mercy seat of God in Christ, amidst all my unworthiness, equal to this; that Christ hath taken my nature up with him to the highest glory; and in that nature, that there is one in the throne whom the Father heareth alway. I feel a thousand blessings in this one consideration, that poor, and wretched, and polluted, as I am, in this body of sin and death, which I carry about with me; yet in that pure, and holy part of my nature, in the Person of Christ Jesus, Jehovah's law hath been magnified, and made honorable; so that a gracious acceptance is given to all his people, in Him, the beloved. When I think of this, and what the Church is in Jehovah's sight, as beheld and accepted in Christ Jesus, I am content to be stript and become naked, as

in the day I was born, that I may be washed in Jesus's blood, and clothed in Jesus's righteousness.

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

We have here, if I mistake not, the process of grace, when the Lord is about to work upon the hearts of his people. They are, as Israel is here described, speaking confidently, and with an high hand; resolving to seek in herself and her own attainments, comfort like the oil and the corn; that is, taking refuge in creature enjoyments, and making to herself cisterns, yea, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Jer. ii. 13. This is in scripture language, *playing the harlot, and doing shamefully*. But see in what follows, what comes next, and how the Lord works.

6 ¶ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

The Lord raiseth perplexities in the soul, to embarrass and entangle the poor sinner in the wild and mad career the sinner is pursuing. And as thorns and briars, which were in the curse pronounced on sin at the first, are suited to this purpose, the Lord will hedge up the sinner's way with them. Reader! do not overlook here how Jesus bore this eminently in his own sacred person, when he became the sinner's surety. You and I have found many a thorny path to our feet in our pilgrimage; but none but the ever blessed Jesus was crowned with thorns, as if to intimate that He should be pre-eminent in suffering, as He is pre-eminent in grace and glory. John xix. 1—5. Well then, the Lord (we are told here) will make a hedge of thorns, to stop the sinner's way; and if this will not keep him back, he will make a wall also. For when the Lord is working by the sovereignty of his grace, to deter the soul he is bringing to himself, if one process will not accomplish the purpose, another shall. Reader! pause, and enquire what you know in your own heart of these things. Depend upon it, that it is *by these things you live, and in this is the life of the soul*.

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

Here we have the beautiful consequence of God's gracious dealings with his people. Though the Lord's people have done, and do commit spiritual adultery with the *Mammon* of this world, and the Church

is continually running after her idols; yet, meeting with nothing but sorrow, disappointment, and vexation of spirit, the Lord mercifully tinging all her pursuits with bitterness and vanity; and by the secret inclinations the Lord works in the heart, working grace, at length issues a cry from the soul, *I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.* Reader! I pray you not to overlook the blessed soul-rejoicing, soul-comforting doctrine here taught the Church. Jesus was, and is, and ever will be, the *first*, and *constant*, and *last*, and only husband of his Church. For whatever idols our poor souls, in the fallen state of an unregenerated, unrenewed nature, through the temptation of hell, may go after, still the Lord Jesus loseth not his right in us, neither we our interest in him. Oh! what a thought is here! Oh! what unknown, unexplored, and endless mercies, are found in it, for every redeemed soul to rejoice in! Christ, as Mediator, received his Church, his bride, his spouse, from the hand and gift of God the Father, before all worlds. True, he was to redeem it in time; but this he had bargained for from all eternity. The lapsed state in Adam, like what is said here of the Church, left our whole nature naked, and as in the day in which we were born, children of whoredoms, and deserving wrath. But Jesus claims his right, and recovers his redeemed, the purchase of his blood, by the sovereignty of his Almighty arm. And having undertaken for her debt, he undertook for her duty also, and therefore makes her *willing in the day of his power.*

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal.

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.

10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

12 And I will destroy her vines, and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, *These are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim wherein she burned incense to them, and she

decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

These are so many blessed expressions, to shew how graciously the Lord is dealing with his people, in the bounties both of providence and grace; while our proud, unhumbled nature, overlooking the Lord's free gifts, is always apt to ascribe every blessing to our own attainment. Moses admonished Israel to be aware of this, and learn to give God the sole glory. Deut. viii. 10. to the end. We may make application of what is here said to spiritual privileges, as well as temporal mercies. The New Moons and Sabbaths, in the Jewish Church, with their feast days, bear a just correspondence to the several means of grace and ordinances in the Christian. And how often do they become unprofitable in their use from our unthinking, forgetful, and ungracious minds.

14 ¶ Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Reader! I beseech you to pause over every verse, and every part and portion of this most blessed Chapter. Was ever grace like thine, thou dear Redeemer? And when the milder methods of thy recovering mercy lose their effect, still thou wilt not relinquish thy people, nor give them up! A wilderness dispensation, under this blessing, shall accomplish *that* which a fulness of privileges could not induce. The valley of *Achor* itself shall open a door of hope, when thou art pleased to turn the heart; and songs of holy joy shall burst forth from the soul, which before had been given to idolatry. The Reader will recollect, I hope, what was recorded of *Achan*, in the wars of *Joshua*; and from hence see the allusion. As *Achan* troubled Israel, and from thence troubles arose; so from the very troubles of God's people, by the Lord's sanctifying blessing upon them, from thence blessings shall come. *Joshua* vii. 1. to end. It is very blessed, very gracious, when by the overruling grace of God, our sorrows are made the means of joy; and our afflictions, from being instrumental to bring the heart to God, become like the spiced wine of the pomegranate.

16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

17 For I will take away the names of Baalim



out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

I can never say enough on the blessedness contained in these words of the Lord Jesus. I say the Lord Jesus; for evidently they are his words. It was neither the person of the Father, nor of the Holy Ghost, that married our nature, by taking a portion of it into union with the Godhead; but it was Jesus. Hence he is emphatically called, the Husband of his people. And there is an uncommon degree of tenderness in the expression *Ishi*. And thankful I desire to be to the Lord, not only for his unparalleled condescension in calling himself by that name; but also for watching over the Church when the translators of our English Bible were mercifully raised up, and commissioned to translate the scriptures from the original Hebrew into our mother tongue, that they preserved the sweet word of Hebrew *Ishi*, in its own state, and gave it to us as it is in our Bibles. It is indeed a blessed word, when graciously spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ of himself, and hath a most sweet and loving signification. The word *Ishi*, and the word *Baali*, both may be translated Husband; and so the word *Baali* is rendered in Isaiah. Chapter liv. 5. *Thy Maker is thine husband*. But there is in *Baali* somewhat of a lordship, or authority, more than in *Ishi*. And we cannot with propriety say, *Baali*, my man; but rather it is my Lord. Whereas *Ishi* more particularly means, *my man*. As if Jesus would be known to his Church by that endeared name. And I venture to believe, that this injunction of our Lord Jesus to call him *Ishi*, had respect to the days of Christ's flesh, when he would in a yet more eminent and endeared manner be known unto his Church and people as the *Ishi*, that is, the *man* Christ Jesus. The Reader will forgive me, I hope, if I add one observation more upon this sweet word *Ishi*. It is well known, that the word of itself contains one of the letters of Jehovah. And this is the highest honor that can be given to any name; so much so, that when at any time (as in the case of *Jeconiah*, afterwards called *Coniah*) if the letter be withdrawn it became a decided evidence of divine displeasure. See Jeremiah, chap. xxii. 24. His name had been *Jeconiah*, but now he hath lost the first and distinguishing letter *Jah*, he is now only *Coniah*. So that *Ishi*, being formed with one of the letters which belongs to the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH, carried with it great dignity, and implied man's relation to Christ. It is no less certain that the feminine of the Woman in the original hath the same honor, and is a symbol of God's grace in her. So that when, as in the Lord's original appointment, the Man and Woman are united to each other in the Lord; both then having this character in their names, and both being by grace as well as nature united to Him and in Him, they are blessed in Him, and have all blessings from Him, to their mutual joy and comfort. But if their union be only in nature, and not in grace; not formed in CHRIST; and not from CHRIST; thus they lose this distinguishing letter in their name, and the word is no longer in the man or woman *Ishi*, but *Esh*, that is *fire*; consuming and destroying one another.

18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the

fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will brake the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

How precious these words! When the LORD is at peace with a redeemed soul in Christ; he maketh the whole creation to be at peace with him: that is, the LORD allows nothing to hurt him. Exercised and tried God's people *may be*; but hurt they *shall not be*. So runs the charter of grace; *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper* (saith JEHOVAH, the FATHER to CHRIST Mediator, and to his people in him,) *and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.* Isaiah liv. 17. Ephes. i. 3.

19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

Was there ever any compellation of words of tenderness like these. Every one is literally and truly fulfilled, in that the Lord Jesus hath united himself to his Church and people, and given them union in himself. The covenant that the Lord hath made *for* his people, that none of the inferior creatures should hurt them, was nothing compared to what he here saith, of the covenant he had made *with* them. Betrothing, implies the marriage covenant, and this is not for a day, but for ever; an union never to be dissolved. And Jesus hath done this in righteousness, because his righteousness is their righteousness in him, and this righteousness is for ever. And this betrothing is in *judgment* also; for not only the whole is founded in divine justice and equity, but by virtue of the soul's union with Christ and acceptance in Christ, God's justice, and God's holiness, is as dear to the believer as his loving-kindness or his mercy. So that every redeemed soul beholds with delight, that Jehovah hath not relaxed a single atom of his demands of righteousness and judgment, but hath received a full, an ample equivalent, at the hands of the sinner's surety, for all sin and uncleanness. *A just God, and a Savior*, are here happily blended. Isaiah xlv. 21. And the betrothing of the people by the Redeemer, not only is done in righteousness and judgment, but in loving kindness and in mercies. Sweet compassion, tenderness, and grace, shall go along with all his dispensations towards them; as the Husband over the wife of his bosom, Isaiah liv. 4, 5, 6. And, as if all these assurances were not enough, the Lord Jesus sums up all with a blessed *even so*, in the faithfulness of his Almighty character, and that his people shall know it. Every jot, every tittle of the covenant shall be fulfilled, and his people shall subscribe to that solemn truth, *God is faithful.* Deuteronomy vii. 9. 2 Timothy ii. 13.

21 And it shall come to pass, in that day ; I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens ; and they shall hear the earth ;

22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall hear Jezreel.

These are very sweet promises, both in a temporal, and in a spiritual sense ; and all ratified, and confirmed, to the believer, in the charter of grace. When the Lord hath brought sinners into a state of salvation, all the nether spring blessings, and the upper spring mercies, both pour in upon the soul. The figure here made use of, in that of God's hearing the heavens, and they hearing the earth, is very beautiful. In times of drought and famine, the earth in vain looks to the heavens for their beneficial influences, if the Lord shuts them up. But when the Lord acts upon the heavens, and the heavens upon the earth, then there will be showers of blessings ; the corn, and the wine, and the oil, shall abound, and the people of *Jezreel* shall be filled with plenty. The same holds good in grace. When the dry and famished souls of poor sinners are savingly brought acquainted with God's rich mercy in Christ, their heaven is no longer to them iron, and the earth brass, but the Lord hears and answers the intercession of his dear Son ; and while prayers are going up, blessings are coming down ; and the Lord becomes gracious to his people. Such, and so great, is the wonderful change brought by sovereign free, and unmerited grace !

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy upon her that hath not obtained mercy : and I will say to *them which were* not my people, *Thou art my people* ; and they shall say, *Thou art my God*.

This is that which in fact lies at the bottom of all our mercies, Jehovah's rich covenant in his threefold person of character, of redemption. The Lord's condescending to take Israel into covenant-relation with himself, in Christ, is the foundation, and the sum, and substance of the whole scheme of grace. Observe, it is God which saith, *I will sow her unto me in the earth*. And it is God which first acknowledgeth Israel for his people, before that Israel acknowledgeth the Lord for his God. It all begins in God, and ends in God. Jesus is both the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the *Author* and *Finisher* of our salvation. And it is most blessed, indeed, when the soul is brought to see, and as cheerfully to delight and acknowledge, that the whole of redemption from beginning to end is of Jehovah, rich, free, and sovereign grace. Then the redeemed can and do in heart and soul join the hymn of heaven, when addressing God and the Lamb, *thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood*. Rev. v. 9.

## REFLECTIONS.

READER! ponder well the very many precious things contained in this blessed Chapter. It is all over gospel from one end to the other; and contains within its sacred bosom, that which always was, and always must be, the very essence of gospel grace; namely, Jehovah's love to poor lost sinners, in the person, work, and righteousness of his dear Son, and their sure acceptance in him, through the infinite merits of his blood, and the covenant-faithfulness of Jehovah.

Behold again and again, how all the mercies of salvation flows in and through this one most gracious channel, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah first calls, and calls most lovingly. Say ye to your brethren, *Ammi*, my people; and to your sisters, *Ruhamah*, beloved. Both sons and daughters are called upon: for Jehovah had promised in redemption-work, to call Christ's sons *from far*, and *his daughters from the ends of the earth*; therefore, here the Lord sends to call them, agreeably to his most sure promise. And observe yet further; though the Lord was about to plead with them, and to tell them of their transgression, and the house of Jacob of their sins; yet the original covenant of redemption, founded in Christ before the world began, and consequently, before their fallen state, was not destroyed. Jehovah's love to his Church in Christ Jesus, was founded in the antient settlements of eternity; so that her after-fall in Adam did not prevent God's original purpose and grace, *given in Christ Jesus before the world began*. Observe further, the gracious methods of divine love, in bringing his Israel unto him. The Lord hedges up the way with thorns, brings the soul into the wilderness; makes crosses spring out of our supposed comforts, and thus by the convictions of his Holy Spirit, compels the soul to return to her first Husband, because all else is vanity and vexation of Spirit. And when the Lord hath in his infinite mercy accomplished the purposes of his grace; then the name of Jesus, husband, brother, friend, become sweet to the soul, and all the fulfilment of God's covenant engagements follow; the Lord acknowledges them for his people; and they acknowledge the Lord for their God.

Reader! doth your personal knowledge of these things make this scripture blessed to your own heart? Hath God so dealt by *you*? Hath he indeed taken away the names of *Baalim* out of *your* mouth? and is Jesus altogether precious to your soul in his person, work, and righteousness? Oh! how truly lovely is it, when God's word corresponds to our experience; and while we read the sacred testimony, we are enabled to *set to our seal that God is true!*

## CHAP. III.

## CONTENTS.

*This is a short but interesting Chapter. The Lord commissions the Prophet, under the same figure of an Adulteress, to set forth the very shameful departure of Israel from the Lord: and his grace in Christ for their recovery.*

**T**HEN said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

In a vision it should seem, that the Lord spake to the Prophet in this manner. As if he had said, *See Hosea!* whether there be such affection in human-kindness, that a man will still go on to love a woman that is requiting his affection with committing adultery. Will he still love her? Yet such hath been my love to Israel, that no change hath taken place in me towards them, though they have left me days without number. Reader! do not fail to remark this grace of God, for surely it is most precious. Turn to those scriptures; Isaiah xliii. 22—25. Jerem. xxxi. 3.

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and *for* an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley:

The Prophet's purchase hath doubtless an allusion to the redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ. It was spoken of as a goodly price, the Redeemer was bought for, Zech. xi. 12. Here the Prophet gave but half that sum. But it is remarkable, that the price of retribution to a man-servant, or maid-servant, hurt by an ox was double this sum. Precious Jesus! was thy precious blood so little set by! Exod. xxi. 32. And how graciously doth the Lord plead for the Church to be faithful. Jesus cannot admit a rival. If the heart be not given to him, there is nothing else he can accept. Reader! think of the graciousness of the Lord, as set forth under these figures. Fifteen piece of silver was but about the value of one pound seventeen shillings of our money. And as for the homer, and half homer of barley, the coarsest of grain, the value of it must have been inconsiderable indeed. And if the figure here used did refer to Christ, to the price given for him, what a gracious representation of the Redeemer's unequalled humility? Some have thought, that beside this, it had another reference, namely, to the dowry of Christ's Church, in her lost, ruined, and undone estate. Those who are of this opinion suppose, that an allusion was made to it by David. 1 Sam. xviii. 25.

3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and

thou shalt not be for *another* man : so *will* I also be for thee.

There is a great beauty in this verse, as well as a great and blessed doctrine veiled under it. Jehovah Jesus might very justly have put away for ever his Israel for their whoredoms, and made the divorce binding ; but not so according to the riches of his grace. Israel shall be divorced, if divorced at all, only *many days*, that is, until the fulness of the Gentiles be completed ; then will the Lord call his antient people home, and their union with him, their glorious head shall be shewn, that Israel could never be for another ; neither could Jesus be but for them. Reader ! consult those sweet scriptures in confirmation of the doctrine, and the beauty and grace of it will abundantly appear. Rom. xi. throughout. Hosea ii. 7.

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim :

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

I beg the Reader to pause over these verses, and when he hath duly pondered their meaning, to consider at this moment the state of the Jews, and behold, how for ages and generations past, the prediction in the *former* part hath been fulfilled in the earth. At the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, they publicly declared, that they had *no king but Cæsar* ; thereby fulfilling the memorable prophecy of the Patriarch Jacob, that *the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh should come*. Compare John xix. 15. with Gen. xlix. 10. The Shiloh was then come, and the sceptre, by their own acknowledgment, was departed. And since that they have had no king ; yea the many days in which they were to be kingless, are not even yet run out. The whole nation is to this hour scattered. They have lost all *the five signs* of the temple : yea, they have no temple, but are unchurched, and in the most desolate and ruined circumstances in respect to divine things. But, Reader ! pray attend with the greatest diligence to the sweet and gracious promise in the *latter* part of this scripture. There shall be a time, when they shall return and seek Jehovah in his threefold character of person in Christ ; and that, in and through him whom they once despised : Jesus the root and offspring of David, their king. This blessed event is to be in the latter days. Oh ! who that hears or reads this gracious promise, but must feel constrained to cry out, *when will the Redeemer arise out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Isaiah lix. 20.

## REFLECTIONS.

PRECIOUS, precious Lord Jesus! let me pass by and pass over every other thought and consideration furnished by this Chapter, to attend to thee, and to that lovely character of thine set forth in this scripture, as the husband of thy people! It is thou, dearest Lord, and not thy servant *Hosea*, that is here set forth, as loving a woman, an adulteress, in thy love to thy Church and people. We have indeed all played the harlot, and done that which even the worshippers of the dunghill gods of the earth, never did; changed their gods, which were no gods; but we have changed that which is our glory, for that which cannot profit. But in the midst of all this rebellion, and apostacy, and departure; thou hast not changed thy love, nor given a bill of everlasting divorce, but if at all, yet only for a season. Every act of thine, in all ages of the Church, very fully shews, that thou hast not put away thy people whom thou didst foreknow. And after many days, thou wilt return and visit thine inheritance, and Israel shall again fear the Lord and his goodness, after many days. Oh! for faith in lively exercise, to be always on the look out for the Lord's coming. Hasten, O Lord, the gracious promise, and arise and have mercy upon Zion; *for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come.*

## CHAP. IV.

## CONTENTS.

*We have here a very sorrowful Chapter. A picture is drawn of the people's transgressions; and the Lord's threatened punishment follows.*

**H**EAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.*

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Here is an awful account of sin in some of the deadly branches of it. But the most awful part of it is, that it is Israel, the Israel of God, that is here spoken of. Sin is sin in any nation, and the crimes here enumerated are horrible wherever they are found. But when God's people are the first in the transgression, this makes sin *exceeding sinful*. Reader! do not overlook this; it is a sad proof which the whole world daily affords of our fallen nature, in the mass of corruption every where abounding. But Moses speaks of the peculiar offence of sin which the Lord saw, because *of the provoking of his sons and daughters*, Deut xxxii. 9—29.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

Here the Lord follows the sins of his people with his threatened punishments. And it is not the smallest in the account, that the priest and Prophet shall have no weight with the people. Where the Lord gives not the understanding heart, the labours of both are but in vain. Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

6 ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame.

Observe Reader! how tenderly in the midst of judgment the Lord seems to mourn over the perishing circumstances of his people. And is it not now to the same cause in our ignorance of Jesus, that all our miseries and the sins of our nature arise. Did we but know Jesus, surely every blessing in love and obedience would follow. Hence Paul's prayer: and in which I beg of you to observe, the great and leading petition is not that we may love him, but that we may know his love to us in all its bearings. See Ephes. iii. 14-19.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.



11 Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart.

12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God:

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks, and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.

The first verse in this paragraph is a very striking scripture. In some of our old Bibles the margin hath it in yet stronger terms: they eat up *the excrement* of my people, meaning that which is most to be abhorred, is most delighted in by the enemies of God. And it should seem, that this is what most defines the character of *the seed of the serpent*. Say what men will, yet the fact returns with double strength and violence, there is an everlasting line drawn between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; between the *Cains* and the *Abels*, the *Esaus* and the *Jacobs* of every generation. The children of the bond-woman will mock and manifest their hatred to the children of the free. Neither can they ever join, either in the life that now is, or in that which is to come. Reader! consult some few of the scriptures in confirmation. John viii. 42, 43, 44. Gal. iv. 22 to the end. 1 John iii. 7—12.

15 ¶ Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend: and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

17 Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone.

18 Their drink is sour: they have committed

whoredom continually : her rulers *with* shame do love. Give ye.

19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

I beg the Reader to observe, for I think it is very observable, and very blessed it is in the observance, what sweet minglings of grace is here amidst the solemn and awful account the Lord gives of his people. Witness the tender watchings over Judah, and the Lord's charge not to follow Israel. As also, the gracious promise of the Lord's feeding them, as a lamb in a large place. I would not determine that it is so : but methinks there is here no small reference to the person and work of the Lord Jesus. I cannot help remarking also, what the Lord saith of Israel's backsliding, in that it is likened to a backsliding heifer. Now it is well known, that the heifer when sliding on slippery ground, is still with her head upward to the place where she aims to go, and hath not turned her back through falling down. So the Lord's people in their backslidings have not relinquished the Lord, though they fall, and make no progress in the divine life. In themselves they are nothing, yea, worse than nothing. But in the Lord they have an interest, however unconscious to their own hearts. Sweet is that scripture to this amount, Hosea xiv. throughout. I cannot but think also, that the other expressions here made use of are more in mercy than judgment. *Let Ephraim alone : he is joined to idols !* Some have thought that this is spoken of in the most awful manner : as if by letting him alone, his everlasting ruin would follow : Rev. xxii. 11. And so it would indeed, if the sentence was uttered by the Lord in this way, for none could ever recover himself from the idols of his own heart, if the Lord's grace did not first enter that heart. And had this been the case with our whole nature after the fall, for what purpose did the Son of God come ? I rather think the sentence is spoken in great grace and mercy. *Ephraim is joined to his idols : let him alone.* For what ? To see and feel the wretchedness of such an union ; until when like the prodigal, he comes to himself by my making his idols bitter to him, and hedging up his way with thorns, and my secretly inclining his heart to consider my love and his baseness, he is brought back with the cry of grace in his heart, *God be merciful to me a sinner !* See a sweet representation similar to this, and given by the Lord himself, Jeremiah xxxi. 18, 19, 20. I do not presume to determine this point. But I venture to think it more in agreement with the whole tenor of scripture. If I err, the Lord pardon. If my views are from God the Holy Ghost's teaching, the Lord's hand be acknowledged in it, and may he make it profitable both to Writer and Reader.

#### REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Lord ! cause my soul to read this solemn Chapter with an eye to what thou hast said, that thou hast declared in it that thou hast a controversy with thy people. 'Oh ! gracious Lord God ! And what

do all thy controversies lead to, but to bring back thy people? Wherefore doth Jesus in his adorable grace, and love, and mercy, send forth his ambassadors, but that they should pray his people, as though God did beseech them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Surely the Church hath reason to be humbled in the dust before thee, when she calls to remembrance, that the land mourns for the sins of it; and that the great and crying sins are the transgressions of the Lord's people. And if the Lord in the days of the Prophet, declared that his people were destroyed for lack of knowledge, what shall be said of the present hour, but that it is a Christ-despising generation, who know not the Lord. Lord, take to thyself thy great name, and come forth for thine own cause, and turn back the captivity of Jacob!

Oh! ye deluded sons and daughters of Adam! ye who take pleasure in the infirmities of God's people, and eat up their sin. Jesus will plead for his redeemed, when he seeth that their power is gone. He will revive his chosen; he will take up their cause; he will yet make them a name and a praise among the people of the earth, to whom they have been a reproach, in the day when he bindeth up their breach and healeth their wound: even in the day of his great power. *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

## CHAP. V.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter is a very proper continuance to the subject in the former. The Lord had said that Ephraim should be let alone, having joined himself to idols; and here is related the sad consequences. The Chapter closes, however, with the prospect of mercy.*

**H**EAR ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel: and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

2 And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I *have been* a rebuker of them all.

3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, *and* Israel is defiled.

4 They will not frame their doings turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredoms *is* in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.

5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:

therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity : Judah also shall fall with them.

It should seem, that in the days of the Prophet, such was the general defect in the pure worship of the God of Israel, that even the priests and the great men openly opposed the truth. *Mizpah* and *Tabor* were places that lay in the path between *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*, so that if any poor Israelite ventured to go up to worship the Lord, those priests watched out to oppose him. Reader! think it not strange, such conduct, for the true spiritual followers of the Lord in every age are dealt with in like manner, and by the like people. The bitterest enemies of Christ's people are among the professors of Christ. *The offence of the cross hath not ceased!*

6 They shall go with their flocks, and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find *him* : he hath withdrawn himself from them.

7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a mouth devour them with their portions.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, *and* the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud *at* Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.

10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: *therefore* I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

11 Ephraim *is* oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.

12 Therefore *will* I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.

The Prophet *Hosea* useth many similitudes, in order to convey yet more forcibly his divine truths; but the whole of what is here said, is much to one and the same purpose; namely, the defection of Israel, and the Lord's displeasure. This is a time of Jacob's trouble. None but the Lord can bring him out of it.

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian,

and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

14 For I *will be* unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah, I, *even* I will tear, and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue *him*.

15 I will go, *and* return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

If we read those scriptures spiritually, and with an eye to Christ, (and in this sense will they be particularly profitable,) we discover in them the weakness of all human attainments, and all human strength, to recover from the ruins of the fall. *Jareb*, the *Assyrian*, is a type of the inefficacy of all human means to cure soul-sickness, and to heal the wounds of sin. None can rescue or deliver, neither can any remedy be found, until the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is known, and felt, in the sovereignty of his power, and *formed in the heart the hope of glory*.

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#### REFLECTIONS.

My soul! dost thou behold in this Chapter, the false teachers here described? Ponder well the awfulness of such characters, who to please men, and find favor with the great, set their nets in the *Mizpahs*, and *Tabors*, of the present hour, to harass and afflict the people of God. Whatever *Hosea* knew of this in his day, he could not know more than the present time affords, of such deceivers and antichrists. Surely there never was a period of the Church, when in what is called the Church itself, so little is known, and so little proclaimed, of the person, work, office, and character, of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Christ, if at all spoken of, is for the most part spoken of by such men, not as He really is, the whole sum and substance of the Bible: the whole of ordinances; and of means of grace; but seen only in the back ground of the subject, and cautiously mentioned, and as cautiously recommended to the people. Reader! observe the Lord's jealousy, I beseech you, in this chapter, and mark it well. Oh! for grace to make Christ what God the Father makes him: the whole, substantially so, of all the covenant; yea, the very covenant itself. Jesus is the first, and the last; the author and finisher; the object, means, and end, of every thing that concerns salvation. If we seek for pardon, where shall we seek it, but in Christ? If for peace, He, and he alone is our peace, *when the Assyrian shall come up into our land*. Need we a promise? Jesus is the sum of all, yea, himself the promise. He is the whole of the law; the substance of all the types, and shadows; the body of all the prophecies: *to him give all the prophets witness*. My soul! see that thou draw improvement from every scripture, in discovering Jesus in that scripture: for

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until thou hast found Him, to whom all scriptures witness, and of whom all scriptures testify; thou knowest nothing yet, as thou oughtest to know. Blessed Lord! grant this, both to Writer and Reader, if it be thy blessed will, that we may know thee, *whom truly to know is life eternal!* Amen.

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## CHAP. VI.

### CONTENTS.

*The opening of this Chapter is most blessed indeed, and carries with it evident tokens of grace. The other parts are somewhat like the preceding Chapters, the Lord's expostulations with his people.*

**C**OME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

Every word in this verse is important and interesting, and I beg the Reader to ponder well the golden sayings contained in it. Some have thought, that what is here said is the immediate result of what the Lord had said in the last verse of the preceding chapter, and ought not to have been separated from it. And indeed I wish the Reader to look back to that verse, and read it with this. For from whence should such a resolution or desire as is here expressed come, but from the Lord's grace in the heart? How blessed is it to read this, and especially after what we have gone through in the preceding Chapters of God's charge against his people, for their revolting from him! And observe, it is not the resolution of one person, and that one going to the Lord alone; but it seems to be a general invitation, *Come, let us return unto the Lord.* And I pray the Reader to observe with me, how pure the gospel is here set forth, in the reasons assigned for the sinner's return: because He who hath torn can only heal. The Holy Ghost that convinceth of sin, can be the only comforter, to convince of the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, to justify and save. So said also the gospel Prophet. Isaiah ix. 13. John xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Precious Jesus! give thy people thus to know thee, and it will be indeed blessed. Deuteronomy xxxii. 39.

2 After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Here is an abundance of most blessed things contained in this verse. Certainly the Prophet had an eye to Christ in his resurrection, as the first fruits of them that sleep. He had an eye also to the spiritual resurrection of every sinner that is made to hear the voice of the Son of God and live. John v. 25. And no doubt there is an eye also to the future resurrection of the body, from the same cause, and by the same power. Rev. xx. 6. Some have thought that there is a particular reference to the second coming of Christ in the Millennium, when the Jews' restoration will take place. I only mention

it; but by no means give an opinion upon it. Certainly the verse is most blessed, and the promise most blessed. Every true follower and lover of the Lord Jesus, will put his hearty Amen to it.

3 Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.

I beg the Reader at the very entrance upon this verse, to observe with me, that the little word *if* is in Italicks; consequently hath no right to be there, and certainly ought not to be there, if the sense be injured by it, or lessened, or destroyed. And that it doth all this is very evident. For if it be left out the doctrine is plain and clear. *Then shall we know; we shall follow on to know the Lord.* For as the first knowledge of the Lord is wholly from his grace, and before that grace is given no one ever can know the Lord; so all the after knowledge is from the same divine teaching, and not deriving an atom from human study, or human attainments. Matt. xi. 27. And I beg the Reader once for all to remark, that this, and similar *ifs* of scripture are never put in, as forming any *cause* or *reason* for such grace being shewn, for the doctrine itself is absolute. *Then shall we know*, saith the Prophet: when? even when the Lord hath *raised up* the poor sinner, and caused him to *live in his sight*. There is a similar passage, Heb. iii. 14. *For we are made partakers* (saith the Apostle) *of Christ*, if *we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*. Here observe, the Holy Ghost is giving testimony of a *present* mercy, not speaking of one in *future*. He saith, *we are made partakers of Christ*. How was this wrought? Surely by grace. Hence therefore our holding fast the beginning of our confidence cannot be the cause, or condition of being made; for that hath been already done, and is really and actually enjoyed. It is only spoken of therefore as our truly feeling it, and knowing it, when by the lively actings of faith, we hold fast and live upon it. But what a whole volume of the richest things is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the latter part of this verse. *His goings forth have been prepared as the morning*. And was it not so, when in the morning of eternity he came up at the call Jehovah, prepared in the everlasting council of peace for the redemption of his people? Was it not so, when in the day dawn, and day-star, of the early revelations in time, he came forth, as the sum and substance of every type, every shadow of the law; every promise, every intimation in the gospel? And is he not so now, and hath been in all ages of his Church, to all, and every one of his redeemed, as prepared for them in the sweetest of all mornings, after the dark night of a sinful, fallen, ruined state, which must have ended in the everlasting blackness of despair, had not Jesus arisen as the sum of righteousness, with healing in his wings? And how doth he come to his people, when visiting them under their original dry and barren state of their wilderness nature, at the *first*, and in all the after manifestations of his grace? Is it not as the rain; both the latter and the former? Every grace of Jesus is indeed as the rain and dew of heaven; that is free, unmerited, unlooked for, and un-

sought. *It tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men.* Micah v. 7. How blessedly Jesus is spoken of under this figure. Psalm lxxii. 6. *He shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass:* refreshing the earth when weary, and scorched, and dry. And I beg the Reader to observe the great beauty of the Prophet's expression, in putting the *latter* rain before the *former*, in allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ. For in *Judea*, there were generally *two* seasons of refreshing rains; the *one* in Autumn, the *other* in the spring. Now at the close of the Autumnal season the seed was then sown; this was what was called the *latter* rain, though in reality the first after seed time, therefore this is *first* spoken of, with an eye to Christ, in watering the souls of his people, when he hath sown the spiritual seed of his grace in their hearts. And the *former* season of the year Jesus refresheth them, in the time of the harvest, when he brings his redeemed home to his heavenly garner. Prov. xvi. 15.

4 ¶ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness *is* as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

If the Reader recollects what I humbly observed in my Commentary on Chapter iv. verse 17. and compares it with this verse, perhaps he may be led to think as I do. Certain it is, we shall think alike, if God the Holy Ghost be the teacher of both. But when I read the gracious, the tender expressions of the Lord, as in this verse, over both Ephraim and Judah, I cannot conceive that the sentence, *let Ephraim alone*, implies the giving up Ephraim to a judicial blindness, and irrecoverable apostacy. Reader! pause over the sweet and gracious expressions of the Lord! Was God at a loss what to do? Oh! no. But we are to accept the words as the melting and yearning compassion of the Lord over the sorrowful state of sin in his people. See Jeremiah xxxi. 20. Hosea xi. 8. Luke xix. 41, 42. The figure of the morning cloud, and early dew, is uncommonly striking, to point out the transient state of any thing that can be called good in man. In an hot summer season, if the morning cloud appears, there is an hope of showers; but soon as the day comes on the cloud vanisheth. And the dew which promiseth to refresh, is soon dried up by the sun. Such is the specious nature of all promised goodness in man!

5 Therefore have I hewed *them* by the prophets: I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments *are* as the light *that* goeth forth.

Probably the hewing by the words of the Prophets, hath a reference to the powerful effects of preaching. We have a striking instance: Acts vii. 51—54. And the Lord compares his word to a fire, and to an hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Jeremiah xxiii. 29. See also Hebrews iv. 12.



6 For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

Our blessed Jesus hath made this scripture memorable by twice quoting it. Matt. ix. 13. and again, Matt. xii. 7. But it should seem, as if by our Lord's expression on both occasions, the sense of it was not then well understood; neither is it now. Some have ventured to suppose, that the sense of it is, that the Lord prefers the mercy and goodness of our hearts to the sacrifices of his own appointing. Whereas the sacrifices, all referring as they do to Christ, carry with them a full conviction, that we have neither mercy nor goodness in our hearts. Jer. xvii. 9. I confess that according to my views of the scripture, the mercy here desired by Jehovah is Christ himself; and the knowledge of God, the knowledge of God in Christ, as the substance of whole burnt-offerings. For Christ is the mercy promised; and Christ the one all-sufficient sacrifice with which alone God is well pleased. Luke i. 72. Ephes. v. 2.

7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant; there have they dealt treacherously against me.

8 Gilead *is* a city of them that work iniquity *and is* polluted with blood.

9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there *is* the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.

11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

We find here the same melancholy account, as in the other parts of this prophecy; the Lord complaining of his people's apostacy; Gilead and the house of Israel; Ephraim and Judah; all alike transgressors. Alas! what but the blood of Christ can expiate the offences of the Lord's people!

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#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! it is blessed amidst the general, yea, universal corruption of our poor fallen nature, to behold, even in a few instances here and there afforded, of the sovereignty of the Lord's grace. And when we hear the cry issuing from the heart, *come, and let us return unto the Lord*, we may well exclaim, *what hath God wrought!* For surely nothing less than an Almighty power could effect the change; and the Lord's grace alone accomplish it.

But it is to thee, O blessed Jesus, as the glorious and efficient cause, the great event in every instance must be ascribed. It is from thy goings forth as the morning, when thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, the auspicious mercy is to be traced. Lord! help me to contemplate thee, under this endeared character! Be it my mercy, night and morning, to behold thee in this lovely, this gracious point of view. By the leadings of thine Holy Spirit, guiding my soul through the sacred pages of thy word, I see thee coming forth as the morning, yea, as a morning without clouds, in the council of peace between the persons of the Godhead, when thou stoodest up, at the call of Jehovah, as the glorious Head, and Surety, of thy people. I see thee also coming in with the very first dawn of revelation, as the seed of the Woman to bruise the Serpent's head. I trace the wonderful subject, all pointing to thee, in every sacrifice, type, and shadow, of the law, during the whole Jewish dispensation; until at length, in the fulness of time, thou camest forth as the morning, in the open manifestation of thyself, in substance of our flesh! Hail! thou glorious, gracious, great Deliverer, of a lost world! And dost thou not now, even now, come forth as the morning, when to the heart of every individual believer, after the long night of the sin, and darkness, and ignorance, of a fallen state, thou manifestest thyself to them in a way of conversion, otherwise than thou dost to the world? Dost thou not, blessed Jesus, make every renewed love token of thy visits, like the morning when coming a-fresh, to revive, to comfort, to help, to maintain, and strengthen thy redeemed, in the dark state of their present pilgrimage? Oh! precious, precious Jesus! continue and increase those sweet visits, morning by morning, and be thou as the rain, both the latter and the former rain, upon the earth. Yea, Lord! come upon my dry and barren heart as showers of blessings! Amen.

## CHAP. VII.

### CONTENTS.

*The subject of reproof is continued through this Chapter. But it is mingled with mercy. Here are many blessed marks to shew that the Lord had mercy in reserve for his people.*

**W**HEN I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

The mercy of God here spoken of, cannot be considered as intended only, and not executed, but rather the words should be read, when I *had* healed Israel. For Christ the Almighty healer had been set up, as the *lamb slain from everlasting*. And it appears to me by the expression, as a beautiful instance of the freeness, and greatness of sovereign grace, that the remedy for sin went before the disease. And certain it is, that the fall of man, as is here said of *Ephraim's*

iniquity, becomes more discovered in the prevenient grace and mercy which the Lord had provided against it. What Paul said of himself, in respect of his ignorance of sin, but by the law, is equally true of our discovery, through God the Holy Ghost, of our fallen state, by beholding the previous provision made for our recovery by the Lord Jesus Christ. See Rom. vii. 7.

2 And they consider not in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

4 They *are* all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, *who* ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

5 In the day of our king the princes have made *him* sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night: in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: *there is* none among them that calleth unto me.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people: Ephraim is a cake not turned.

9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face; and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

I include all these verses under one view; for they are all to the same amount. They represent the same melancholy truth, only by different figures. The heart of man ready like an oven, always heated; is a similitude to display the unceasing bias of it to evil. All the other wombs of nature wear out by bringing forth. The earth itself, if not replenished, will at length become barren. The parents of *every* species are prolific no longer than within certain boundaries. And both must concur, during that period, to produce

the like. But the human heart in the oldest age ceaseth not the sending forth sin. This is a womb that is never barren. It needeth no other parent than itself; neither tempting devil nor enticing world, (though both too often work with it) to bring forth its inbred, indwelling sins, into being. To use the figure of the Prophet; the heart is like the baker's oven, which burneth all the night while he sleepeth, and in the morning it is ready to his hand; so our hearts are always heated by the sin that dwelleth there, and which, unless restrained by grace, breaks out of itself into evil! Reader! think how infinitely precious Jesus ought to be, and indeed is, when once the Holy Ghost hath convinced of sin, and taught to you, or to me, the same lesson as he taught Paul, when he said, *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.* Rom. vii. 18.

11 ¶ Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven: I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard.

13 Woe unto them; for they have fled from me! destruction unto them; because they have transgressed against me! though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, *and* they rebel against me.

15 Though I have bound *and* strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

16 They return, *but* not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

We have here a continuation of the same subject, namely, the Lord's remonstrance with Israel. But I pray the Reader to observe, how many sweet and gracious expressions of our God are mingled with his complaints. The Lord points out indeed their unworthiness and rebellion; but he speaks of his punishments of the people as in mercy. Hence he calls these *bringings down as chastisements*. He saith, *I have redeemed them*, notwithstanding their lies. He *bound and strengthened their arms*, though they imagined mischief against the Lord. Surely there is a great deal of gospel in all this, and evident proofs, that amidst all his people's forgetfulness of the Lord, the Lord hath not forgot his covenant faithfulness, nor the promises

of his grace, which he had made to a thousand generations. Psalm cv. 8. Reader! what a mercy it is, that we have a covenant God and Father in Christ; look to, and to trust in, who *though we deny him, yet he abideth faithful, he will not deny himself.* 2 Tim. ii. 13.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let this Chapter, as many other Chapters of the same nature and doctrine are highly calculated for, lead your heart and mine, under the teachings and influences of God the Holy Ghost, to take a double view, and in one and the same moment, behold the corrupt and fallen state of man, and the infinite grace and goodness of God. I do not say, that the Lord took occasion from man's misery to magnify the exceeding riches of his grace in providing salvation; for His love was before our misery; and his covenant grace in Christ existed before all worlds. But I may say, that in every instance of divine favor the Lord doth make the glory of his grace to shine towards his redeemed; and where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord!

Reader! when you and I look into ourselves, what do we see but evil, and that continually? When now the Lord hath healed us in Jesus, how is our iniquity discovered? Our hearts are always ready to the lust of evil, like the baker's oven! How have we, like Ephraim, mixed ourselves with the heathen, and learned their works? And though we return, yet how often is it deceitfully, and not to the Most High! Is it not so? Think then, how gracious, long suffering, and slow to anger, the LORD is? Gracious Lord Jesus! how shall we ever rightly and fully value the infinitely precious and costly sacrifice of thy blood and righteousness? How indeed shall creatures such as we are, rightly value what our utmost conceptions cannot fathom, or comprehend? Oh! for grace, to have some glimpses of those infinite dimensions of Almighty love, in all its heights, and depths, and breadths, and lengths, which passeth knowledge! Oh! to behold thee, thou blessed Lamb of God, in thy unceasing worthiness before the throne; and never, never to forget that thy blood speaketh more for thy boughten ones, than all their sins speak against them. Yea, dearest Lord, do thou enable me to cherish the sweet thought in my soul day by day; that a sense of the remains of indwelling sin in my nature, may not overwhelm me in despair; that thou art still appearing as a Lamb that hath been slain, in the presence of God for thy people, and canst, and wilt save to the uttermost all that come to God by thee, seeing that thou ever livest to make intercession for them. Amen.

## CHAP. VIII.

## CONTENTS.

*We have here another Sermon of the Prophet, or perhaps it is but a continuation of the former, for the subject is the same. The Lord expostulates with his people, and threatens to correct them.*

**S**ET the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come* as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

3 Israel hath cast off *the thing that is good*: the enemy shall pursue him.

4 They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew *it* not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols; that they may be cut off.

5 ¶ Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long *will it be* ere they attain to innocency?

6 For from Israel *was* it also; the workman made it: therefore it *is* not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

8 Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure.

The Chapter opens with a command to some one, and it should seem most likely to be to the Prophet, to cry aloud, in a way of reproof and expostulation. The expression is not unlike that command to Isaiah, chap. lviii. 1. And if we spiritualize the chapter, and for a moment lose sight of Israel of old, and read in what is here said, the Lord speaking to his Israel now; the word, under his Almighty teaching, will be very profitable. For Reader! mark verse by verse what the Lord here saith, and see if there be not too great a correspondence in God's church, and among God's people, to what Israel is here charged with. Have not we transgressed the Covenant? and trespassed against God's law? And do we not, in the midst of all this,

say, as Israel did; *My God, we know thee?* How often have we set up idols in our hearts, as the Kings and Princes of Israel did? How often have we been seeking alliance with creature strength, and creature confidences; setting up a righteousness of our own, instead of living wholly upon Jesus and his righteousness? Reader! do you not feel the full force of the Apostle's expostulation; *what then? are we better than they?* No, in no wise, for we have before proved both *Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin.* Rom. iii. 9. Reader! it is very humbling this, but it is thus the Lord teacheth us to profit, when we read scripture with an eye to our own state in the Church's history.

9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.

10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

12 I have written to him the great things of my law, *but* they were counted as a strange thing.

13 They sacrifice flesh *for* the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat *it*; *but* the Lord accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities; but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

Here is a very striking passage in these words of the Lord, and is as suited to all ages as to the age of Israel. The Lord saith, that the great things he wrote to Israel were counted by them strange things. And Reader! what more strange to thousands, who call themselves Christians, than the pure doctrine of Christ's blood and righteousness, as the only possible means of salvation, and yet what so great and so glorious? Who, untaught of God the Holy Ghost, can enter into a right apprehension of that blessed doctrine; *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them?* 2 Cor. v. 19. We shall indeed know these things to be the great things of God, if so be the Holy Ghost condescends to be our teacher. But without his gracious instruction, the mystery of godliness will be to us as strange things, and men will now, as much as in the days of Christ's flesh, call the most blessed truths *hard sayings*, and go back from JESUS, who never in heart walked with JESUS. John vi. 60—66, &c.

## REFLECTIONS.

READER! Was there ever a period in the Church of Christ, when those that are divinely inspired, and called to the office of ambassadors for Jesus, needed to set the trumpet more powerfully to the mouth, and to call upon the sinners in Zion to be afraid for the impending judgments of God? Surely the Lord hath a controversy with the people, and he will plead with Israel. But, blessed Jesus! how sweet and refreshing doth it become to thy faithful ones, however few in number, that the interests of thy redeemed are safe, neither shall hell's gates prevail against the Church of Jesus. The enemy may have a momentary triumph; the adversaries of God's people seem to rejoice. The Church languishes in all her borders. But there is *a set time to favour Zion*, and in due season the Lord will arise to manifest his sovereignty, and the lighting down of his glorious arm. In the sure expectation of this, let God's tried ones repose, looking unto Jesus, who is both the Author, and Finisher, of faith. Shortly he will come to take out of his kingdom all things that offend; and prove himself to be the whole of salvation to his redeemed. In that blessed day of God, may it be the felicity, both of him that writes, and him that reads, (if the Lord will,) to be found among the ransomed of Zion, that shall return with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads, when sorrow and sighing, sin, sickness, and death, shall be known and felt no more.

## CHAP. IX.

## CONTENTS.

*We have here the threatened visitations of the Lord upon Israel, on account of transgressions. And if we read those awful denunciations of God, and keep in remembrance their accomplishment in the Babylonish Captivity, the whole is explained to us.*

**R**EJOICE not, O Israel, for joy, as *other* people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn floor.

2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.

I beg the Reader to remark with me, how much the Prophet dwells in all his Sermons, upon that feature of character which is so lovely and gracious; I mean the Lord Jesus being the Husband of his people. Though Israel had gone a whoring from her God; and worthless, and base as this was, yet, Reader, do not overlook the Lord's grace in Israel's unworthiness. Israel could not have been charged with this crime of unfaithfulness, had not the Lord been her Husband. And while we find the Lord lamenting this perfidy of his spouse, as he doth continually in those scriptures, can there be a higher proof than



that the Lord, through the whole of his complaints, is manifesting grace that Israel may return? Isaiah liv. 5. Jeremiah iii. 1. Oh! how truly blessed is such a view of Jesus!

3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's land ; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria.

4 They shall not offer wine-offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him ; their sacrifices *shall be* unto them as the bread of mourners ; all that eat thereof shall be polluted : for their bread for their soul shall not come into house of the LORD.

Looking with an eye to the captivity in Babylon, the Lord threatens Israel with removing them from the holy land. Indeed, an unfaithful wife ought not to dwell under the roof with her injured husband. The Lord is very jealous for his honor. And when that Israel no longer dwells in the Lord's land, how shall she enjoy the Lord's sacrifices?

5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?

6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction ; Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them ; the pleasant *places* for their silver, nettles shall possess them : thorns *shall be* in their tabernacles.

Reader, I beg of you to observe the Lord's grace still to Israel. How tenderly doth the Lord mourn over his captives, when beholding them void of ordinances. What will ye do, saith the Lord ? If there were no other expressions than these of the kind, I cannot but think that these are enough to prove, that the whole of what is said in judgment, is all with an eye to mercy ! *Egypt*, and *Memphis*, are here spoken of as the cities of desolation to Israel.

7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come : Israel shall know *it* : the prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

8 The watchman of Ephraim *was* with my God, *but* the prophet *is* a snare of a fowler in all his ways, *and* hatred in the house of his God.

9 They have deeply corrupted *themselves* as in

the days of Gibeah : *therefore* he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness : I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her first time : *but* they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto *that* shame ; and *their* abominations were according as they loved.

11 *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird ; from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them *that there shall* not be a man left ; yea, woe also to them when I depart from them !

13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, *is* planted in a pleasant place : but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

Reader ! do not fail still to pursue the subject with an eye to the Lord's grace, for the whole Chapter is full of it. The Lord, to whose comprehensive view, all things past, present, and future, form but one and the same object ; beheld the visitation as at the door. His watchmen had shewn it. The event cannot be passed over. But pray remark, how tenderly the Lord still speaks of Israel, in the days of his espousals. The Lord found Israel, like grapes in the wilderness ; that is, as grapes are peculiarly grateful in such a place ; so Israel was to the Lord ; pleasant and delightful. See Jeremiah ii. 2, 3. Reader ! there is a peculiar aggravation in the sins of God's people, after they have known the Lord. This is *to wound the Redeemer in the house of his friends.* Zach. xiii. 6.

14 Give them, O LORD : what wilt thou give ? give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts.

15 All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal : for there I hated them : for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more : all their princes *are* revolvers.

16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit : yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay *even* the beloved *fruit* of their womb.

17 My God will cast them away, because they

did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

There is the same strain in this part of the Prophet's discourse as in the former: and the whole sum and substance of the sermon, is the Lord's grace and Israel's unworthiness. But I hope the Reader will not fail, under the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, to discover that the chastisements of the Lord here spoken of, are the chastisements of a friend: and all that is here spoken by the Lord, in reference to punishment, is with the view of sanctifying his dispensations to his glory, and Israel's recovery in Christ Jesus. Hosea's text to this and every sermon in his prophecy, is suited in that blessed scripture; *O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.* Hosea ~~iii~~ 19.

13. 9

### REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Emanuel! how can I fail to behold thee, in this Chapter, under the endearing character of the Husband of thy Church; while hearing my Lord thus expostulating with his Israel of old, for their whoredoms and fornications! Indeed, indeed, precious Jesus! thou hast married our nature, in having taken that pure portion of it, which thy Father gave thee, into union with thyself. And thou hast thereby most plainly and fully proved, how great and unequalled the love thou hast fixed on thy spouse the Church. And didst thou not know, holy Redeemer, how unfaithful and unworthy thy wife would prove? Yea, Lord! thou didst not only know it, but didst declare it. *I knew* thou didst say, *that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and be called a transgressor from the womb!* Yet such was thy love, that this did not stop the graciousness of thine Almighty purposes; neither prevent thy union, or the manifestation of thy tender affection to thy people. In every age, to the worthlessness of thy chosen, thy grace hath been shewn; neither hast thou kept back thy loving mercy from thy redeemed, even when like Israel here, thy Church hath gone a whoring, and set up the stumbling block of iniquity in the heart! Oh! Lamb of God! what patience but thine could have borne with the sins of thy people; yea, with the unceasing rebellions of the hand that now writes? From the first moment that thou didst pass by, and beheld our whole nature *cast out to perish, and polluted in our blood, and didst bid us live* to the present hour of thy Church; who shall recount most among all the members of thy redeemed, the greatest recoveries by grace, amidst the greatest undeservings of nature? Whose song on earth, or whose note of salvation in heaven, shall be the loudest in praise of Jesus's love? Precious Lord Jesus! while I read *Hosea's* prophecy; behold the relation of Israel's sins, and thy mercy; while I call to mind how thy long suffering hath been exercised in the thousand and ten thousand instances of all thy people, from that period to the present; yea, from the garden of Eden, through all the ages of the Church; and to continue until the consummation of all things; I feel constrained to cry out in the language of thy servant the Prophet; *who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. Thou retainest not thine anger for ever; because thou*

*delightest in mercy. Yes! precious Jesus; thou wilt turn again; thou wilt have compassion upon us; thou wilt subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*

## CHAP. X.

### CONTENTS.

*The same subject of reproof and expostulation forms the burden of this Chapter. The Lord, by his servant the Prophet, is still speaking to Israel.*

**I**SRRAEL is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

Reader! do pray remark the change of circumstances in the Church, by reason of the Lord Jesus coming for the salvation of his people, to what is said of Israel by the Prophet in this verse. Now Jesus is the vine, and his people branches on him, there is no emptiness, no barrenness, nor poverty. And wherefore, but because from Jesus, Israel's fruit is found. John xv. 1, &c. Hosea xiv. 8.

2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

3 For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

4 They have spoken words swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

Alas! how often do the Lord's people still find a divided heart! Precious Jesus! though I am fully convinced that there can be no happiness but in thee, yet how frequently is my poor heart going after idols! Jesus! do thou exercise thy lawful sovereignty over my affections, and by thy Holy Spirit so bring every thought into obedience, that I may know no Lord but thee!

5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that

rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

6 It shall be also carried into Assyria *for* a present to king Jareb : Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

7 *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.

8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed : the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars : and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us : and to the hills, Fall on us.

It is remarkable what connection there is in the apprehension of sinners in their fears, how remote soever they are from their sinful transactions. A plain proof of the workings of conscience ! Rev. vi. 16.

9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah : there they stood : the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

The reference here to the battle of *Gibeah*, seems to be that which is spoken of, Judges xx. But spiritually considered, to the Israel of God at large, the allusion is yet more striking. Here the charge is, from the first moment of Israel's call, to the last of Israel as a Church. Under this view, how truly precious is Jesus ?

10 *It is* in my desire that I should chastise them ; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.

11 And Ephraim *is as* an heifer *that is* taught, and loveth to tread out *the corn* : but I passed over upon her fair neck : I will make Ephraim to ride ; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.

The expressions and the figure of an heifer, in these verses, are not so clear so as to enter into the full apprehension of them. But generally speaking, they describe the Lord's grace, and Israel's unfaithfulness.

12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy ; break up your fallow ground : for *it is*

time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity : ye have eaten the fruit of lies : because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle : the mother was dashed in pieces upon *her* children.

15 So shall Beth-el do unto you, because of your great wickedness : in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

In the opening of this paragraph we find blessed allusions to the person of Christ : for He, and He alone, is the righteousness to which God's people can sow ; and as they are God's husbandry, so Jesus is the only mercy in which they can reap. The figure of fallow ground is very striking, to point out the poverty and leanness of our nature. And the Lord raining righteousness upon his people, is as blessed a figure, whose promise to come to his people is as the rain, the latter rain, and the former in their season. Psalm lxxii. 6. And the awfulness of the barren heath of sinners, which knoweth not when good cometh, is with the same truth set forth under the similitude of *plowing wickedness and reaping iniquity*.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! it is very blessed, in reading these scriptures of the Old Testament, to behold how the figures made use of are explained under the New. Our emptiness as a vine, and the plowing of the heart in wickedness, are strong representations to what is really the case of every man by nature, when the fallow ground is not turned by God, and the whole man remains unregenerated and unrenewed by grace. But when the soul is made sensible of this, and under divine teaching is led to behold the infinite preciousness of Jesus ; then the poor awakened sinner feels the whole force of the Prophet's words, and finds it to be high time indeed to sow in righteousness, and to reap the rich mercy of God's free and sovereign grace in Jesus Christ! Reader! it will be no small improvement of this Chapter, if by God the Holy Ghost's gracious influence, so much in Israel's emptiness and transgression we discover, as to be made sensible of our own ; and from such a conviction of our nothingness, the all-sufficiency and suitableness of the Lord Jesus is discovered ; for then we shall gladly flee from all creature dependencies, to take refuge in Creator strength ; and feeling what we are in ourselves by nature, most earnestly rejoice in what we are made by grace. Such views will tend to endear Christ to the heart ; and form him there *the only hope of glory*.

## CHAP. XI.

## CONTENTS.

*We have here a most gracious account of divine love; and a most melancholy account of human ingratitude. There is much of the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel in this Chapter.*

**W**HEN Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Though I am free to confess, that what is here said may every word of it be applied to the calling Israel out of Egypt; yet, as we have the authority of an infallible Expositor, Matt. ii. 15, to assure us that what is here said of the call of God's Son out of Egypt, expressly referred to the Lord Jesus Christ; I hesitate not to consider the whole of Israel's history, as to this event in Egypt, merely typical of Christ, and would wish to lose sight of every thing that is said of that history, any further than as it may serve to shew how important the call of God's beloved Son from Egypt was, which the Lord thought proper to have represented in figure so many ages before. Here the history of Israel's call from Egypt becomes interesting, very highly so, and we do well to keep it in remembrance, and to make use of it for this end. But we sadly overrate any thing, and every thing, if we lose sight of Christ in the type, or place the one with the other on the same ground. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him*, saith Jehovah? When was this? Not surely in the beginning of forming the Church, when coming out of Egypt. When was it then? Not in the first giving the Covenant to Abraham, or the promise to Adam, that the seed of the Woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was long before this! Yea, it was before the foundation of the world. It was at that period in eternity, if any angel of light had a being to count it, when as Jesus himself saith, in the character of Wisdom Mediator, *the Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old; when, as the Lord saith, I was set up from everlasting.* Prov. viii. 22 to end. Considered in this light, and what follows is most blessed indeed, the Lord Jesus graciously condescends to take the name of his people; and as graciously allows his people to call themselves after him. See Isaiah xlix. 3. Ephes. iii. 14, 15. He is declared to be *the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead.* Rom. i. 4. And they are said to be *sons of God by adoption and grace.* John i. 12. And if Jesus be called out of Egypt; so are they, by sovereign grace, called out of the Egypt of a fallen bondage nature, and shewn thereby to be beloved in Christ by the Father, as the Father hath loved Christ, as God-man-Mediator. John xvii. 23. Precious Lord Jesus! how blessed it is to behold thee in all thy pre-eminency!

2 *As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.*

I beg the Reader, as a further confirmation to what I have observed in the first verse, that the Lord by his servant the Prophet, is here speaking of *them*, and not as before of *him*. Whereas, had the *first* verse referred to Israel in Egypt, there needed no change of numbers here; for the Lord is evidently now speaking of Israel in the plural, even the Lord's Israel the Church. (And this by the way of a change of persons, so frequently to be met with in the sacred writings, ought always to be closely attended to, as a faithful guide to the proper apprehension of the word of God.) The strange propensity of Israel to the worship of the dunghill gods of Egypt, and the nations around need not be mentioned. The Lord makes many gracious expostulations with Israel on this account all the way through; so that it is only to refer to their history every where to find instances of it. Reader! what saith the heart of God's Israel even now, after the wonderful calls of grace? Dearest Jesus! how prone are thy people to backslide?

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

Observe the grace of the Lord, by way of heightening that grace, in the riches of it! It was never for want of education, in any period of the Church, that his people revolted; for the Lord did by them as the affectionate mother doth by her infant child; when in leading strings, she watches over the first attempts of the babe to walk. And thus the Lord doth now. The same grace that calls us from the Egypt of a state of nature, leads, by divine teaching, through all the paths of our pilgrimage, and through the whole state of grace. *All thy people shall be taught of the Lord*, is an Old Testament promise, and faithfully confirmed under the New Testament dispensation. Isaiah liv. 13. John vi. 45. Jesus both leads, and carries in his arms, and heals all the diseases of his people, though our ignorance is like that of Israel.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

This is a sweet verse, and serves very blessedly to explain the powerful efficacy of the Lord's grace, at the same time the tenderness of the methods made use of is as plainly set forth. *The cords of a man*; not the yoke of the beast of labour; *the bands of love*; not the compulsive force of terror and fear. We have several beautiful illustrations of this: Jeremiah xxxi. 3. Song i. 3, 4. 2 Cor. v. 14. It is a sweet doctrine of the gospel this, and thus graciously set forth. The effect produced is not by human persuasion, or human power; but by divine inducements wrought in the soul. The sinner feels constrained in the contemplation of Jesus' love, like the fragrancy of ointment to the senses, or the allurements of music to the ear. See John xii. 32. And observe, the same Lord that thus drew them to his



love, gave them food for their support. Yes! Jesus is both shelter and food; the teacher and the feeder of his redeemed. He is the bread of life, and the water of life; the garment of salvation, and the whole glory of his people Israel.

5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.

7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt *him*.

We have here the sad account of Israel's requital of the Lord's kindness. In which Reader, we shall as sadly mistake the subject if we overlook in Israel's history our own. As Israel threatened to return to Egypt, so often do the Lord's people now look back, and in their hearts too often return to the things of the world. And were it not for divine patience, many that are preserved to be among the cloud of God's witnesses, might have been like the wife of Lot, pillars of salt. Gen. xix. 26. Heb. xii. 1. See also Numbers xiv. 2, 3, 4.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? *how* shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for *I am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

Reader! pause over those precious words, and ponder well their gracious meaning. *Admah* and *Zeboim*, were the cities the Lord destroyed with *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. Deut. xxix. 23. Now, as the inhabitants of those cities merited punishment, so did Ephraim and Israel, considered in themselves. For, as the Apostle justly reasons upon another occasion, the same doctrine holds equally good here. Are we then better than they? Rom. iii. 9—20. But the Lord refers their salvation into himself, and his own unchangeable nature, and unchangeable purposes in Christ. This is the most blessed of all doctrines, and the most gracious to our poor fallen nature. Oh! for grace, to refer all the glory, and all the praise, where alone it is due. The Lord hath himself provided a remedy in the blood and righteousness of his dear Son; and in his own faithful and unchange-

able covenant promises, and in the great plan of redemption hath secured the everlasting salvation of his people.

10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with his saints.

Here the promise is sweetly opened, of the blessedness in the Lord's saving his people; for *they shall walk after the Lord*; that is, I apprehend, after the Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah saith elsewhere, that *he will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name.* Zach. x. 12. The roaring of the lion is a strong expression, to shew the powerful voice of the Lord Jesus, *the lion of the tribe of Judah.* And the trembling of the children, implies what blessed effects in conversion the Lord's voice shall have upon them. John v. 25. And though Ephraim and Israel still carry with them the tokens of their rebellion; yet our glorious Judah is faithful, and his seed the Judahs of the Lord will be preserved in their faithfulness; and shall be kept by *the power of God, through faith unto salvation.* 1 Pet. i. 5.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! beg with me for grace from God the Holy Ghost, that we may both follow up his merciful design in giving the Church this precious Chapter, and behold the love of God the Father to his dear Son! See how God's own son, when appointed before all worlds, to be Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, for salvation to his body the Church; was beloved in the divine mind in this gracious character! Hence he called him out of the Egypt of this world. Hence, in his divine counsels, he set him up, not in his open flesh from the beginning, but subsisting secretly in the mediatorial settlements of eternity. And when the fulness of time was come, he came forth for the salvation of his people. And in all the events of his mysterious life, ministry, and death; we may say concerning him, as the Apostle did in his devout prayer; *of a truth Lord, against thine holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together; for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.* And may we not add from the same authority, in all the works and sufferings of Jesus; *thine hand did lead him, and thy right arm did strengthen him.* Yea, Lord, the Mediator, in all his soul travail, did cast himself upon thee; and thou didst manifest that he

was the very Christ, in making the pleasure of Jehovah *to prosper in his hand!*

And now, Lord, for his sake, look upon the whole Church, and love them *as thou hast loved him.* Teach them, Lord! to go, taking all thy little ones by their arms. And though they know not the Lord, as the Lord *Rophe*, that healeth them, yet draw them with *the cords of a man*, yea, with *the bands of love*; and fulfil thy gracious promise to our glorious Head, in making all his people willing *in the day of thy power.* And though thy people are bent to backsliding, and their heart is prone to wander, yet, Holy Father! how canst thou give them up? How canst thou make them as *Admah*, or *Zeboim*; while the One Holy Man, whose name is Wonderful, is in the Sodom of this our world, to save his people from their sins? Hath he not brought in an everlasting righteousness, with which thou hast declared thyself well pleased. And is not this the very righteousness in which thou beholdest thy people? Oh! most gracious God and Father! we would look up to thee, in, and through the blessed Son of thy love, and say in the language of thy Church: *behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed!* Hear, Lord, the voice of *Judah*, and bring him unto his people; for *Judah* yet ruleth with God; and is faithful with the saints!

## CHAP. XII.

### CONTENTS.

*The subject contained in this Chapter hath respect to Ephraim; Judah and Jacob: in it there is a mixture of reproof and commendation.*

**E**PHRAIM feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

Under the figure of wind is here shewn, the vanity and emptiness of the pursuits of *Ephraim*. Any thing, and every thing, seems preferred by *Ephraim*, to the Lord!

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways: according to his doings will he recompense him.

Here the whole tribes of Israel and Judah are reproved. The Lord shews to what a degenerate state the both families were brought, and how different from the conduct of their first common father Jacob. Reader! it is a sad reproach to a family, when the descendants depart from the exemplary godliness of their fathers.

3 ¶ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed, he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in Beth-el*, and there he spake with us.

5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

We have here the most honorable testimony of the Patriarch Jacob, in the record God the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to give of his conduct at *Bethel* in that memorable night, when expecting the furious anger of his brother Esau to break out upon him the following day. The history is given us, Gen. xxxii. and the Holy Ghost hath thrown so much light upon it of what is *there* said, by what is *here* recorded, that we can never sufficiently bless the Holy Spirit for his grace and condescension in this particular. I beg the Reader to recollect, that what the Prophet is here commissioned to tell the Church of the Patriarch Jacob, related to an event which took place a thousand years before. Jacob had been now dead for nine hundred and fifty years, and yet the Holy Ghost refers to it, as though it had been but yesterday. And how delightfully the Prophet is led to introduce it. *He took his brother by the heel in the womb.* So that he was an hero for wrestling from the very moment of his birth, as if to imply what great events in grace he would be remarkable for in the circumstances of his life. The history itself, with the cause, is very fully given us, Gen. xxv. 20–26. And as Jacob began, so in the events that followed he manifested the disposition he had to struggle. *By his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power with the Angel, and prevailed.* The Patriarch, it is plain, knew both, and referred to this circumstance when a-dying. *The God, said he, (as he blessed Joseph's children) that fed me all my life long unto this day: the Angel which redeemed me from all evil.* Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. Surely here Jacob rightly considered God the Father, in his covenant character; and the Lord Jesus Christ as the angel of the covenant, to whom he ascribed the great work of redemption. *He had power with both:* that is, I apprehend, he took hold of the strength of God's covenant promises, and Jesus's justifying salvation, and in that strength he prevailed by faith. See Isaiah xxvii. 5. *He wept and made supplication unto him;* that is, Jacob wept and entreated; not indeed for that the angel touched his thigh and made him halt, but because the object of his petition was so great, and Jacob knew who it was he wrestled with. And hence he called this angel with whom he wrestled God, a plain proof of Christ's being known to Jacob as God, for he said, *I have seen God face to face, and my life was preserved,* Gen. xxxii. 30. But what I beg the Reader yet more particularly to remark is, that as Jacob found God and his Christ in *Bethel*, so it is added, and there he spake with us. Who is the *he* that is here said to speak with us, but the Lord Jesus Christ? And who the *us*, but all the praying seed of Jacob, that as Levi the son of Abraham, so were we in the loins spiritually considered of our father Jacob, when Jesus met him. In confirmation see those scriptures, Heb. vii. 10. Gal. iii. 29. *The Lord God of hosts, the Lord is his memorial:* these blessed words

come in at the close of this wonderful relation, as if to silence every fear or doubt that might arise in the timid mind. All the persons of the Godhead are alike engaged, in confirmation of the covenant redemption, to the spiritual seed of Jacob in Jesus; and Jehovah takes to himself this glorious title of character, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as his memorial for ever to all generations. Exod. iii. 15. So truly blessed and gracious is the record here made of that memorable transaction, and so much light is thrown upon it by the Prophet under the Holy Ghost's teaching.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God : keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

7 *He* is a merchant, the balances of deceit *are* in his hand : he loveth to oppress.

8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance : *in* all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that *were* sin.

9 And I *that am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feasts.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets.

11 *Is there* iniquity *in* Gilead? surely they are vanity : they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

The Prophet here follows up the just and becoming resolution which ought to take place in every heart of Jacob's children, whether Ephraim or Judah, in pursuing the steps of their father. And he goes on in those verses to shew the great folly, as well as sin, in not doing it. What a sad thing must it have been, that in the very place made memorable to the Father by the visions of God, and therefore by him called *Bethel*, the house of God; the children should make it *Beth-aven*, which signifies the house of an idol or iniquity! But, Reader! do remark the grace of God in what is said. The Lord did not cease to be to them the Lord their God; God in covenant. The Lord did not withdraw from them the gracious tokens of his divine presence; neither the ministry of his holy word, or his servants the prophets. He still spake to them by an open prophecy, and by private visions; although *Gilgal*, which was the city of the priests, abounded in transgression. I venture to think that there is in those verses strong allusions to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Similitudes and visions all directed their leading points to Him, and in Him had their accomplishment. Rev. xix. 10.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

14 Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly : therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his LORD return unto him.

The Holy Ghost is here again pleased to refer to the history of Jacob, and affectionately speaks of him and his love. But if Jacob be so spoken of under those endearments of character; what must we say of the Lord Jesus Christ? Jacob fled to *Syria* to avoid his brother's anger. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this our world to remove his Father's anger from his people. Israel served for a wife : Jesu's zeal to his Father's honor and love for his spouse the Church, made him endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. The sheep of Jacob, and the heritage his services obtained him, cost him indeed labour. But Jesus laid down his life for his sheep. He died that his people might live; yea, He became sin, and a curse for his redeemed, that they might be delivered both from sin and the curse, and be made the righteousness of God in him. Oh! how do all characters among men sink to nothing, when brought into account in the view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21. How doubly aggravated, yea, bitterness itself doth Ephraim's provocations appear, while contemplating the Lord's grace! Yet, Reader! notwithstanding this, I pray you still to observe the over-abounding grace of our covenant God in Christ, that he doth not give up, or lose sight of his covenant relations to his people, in his dear Son, but (as you perceive in this verse) still calls himself *Israel's Lord*. *Oh! the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* Oh! how doth grace shine in the glories of God's rich, free, sovereign mercy in Christ Jesus! Precious, precious Lord, from whom cometh salvation; what shall the Church render thee of love and praise, for all thy mercies? *Thanks, thanks be unto God, for his unspeakable gift.*

#### REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader! and behold how God honored the Patriarch Jacob, a thousand years after his ashes had been mouldering in the dust! Behold what praise the Lord bestowed upon his servant's gallant faith; and learn from hence, how costly such sacrifices are in his sight, when coming up before him in his dear Son's name. Oh! that you and I may learn herefrom to wrestle with God in prayer, that like the Patriarch, we may have strength in the same source, and have power with God to prevail.

But, Reader! while looking at Jacob, let us not overlook Jacob's Lord. It is Jesus, that as a prince and a Saviour hath power with Je-

hovah, and hath prevailed. By his own righteousness, and by the incense of his merits and atoning blood, he comes off victorious, and must prevail. *Father! I will!* is the language of our Lord. And while his pleadings are all for his redeemed, what is there then can be withheld, to the all powerful, all prevailing intercessions of his priesthood? Precious Lord Jesus! give me to see thee in thy daily office, now thou art entered into the presence of God for thy people. Thou hast indeed, like the Patriarch Jacob, thy type, served for thy wife, as he did for his; and dearly indeed purchased thy Church with thy blood. Oh! keep, Lord, thy redeemed, with thy power, and preserve them to thine eternal kingdom, and be thou, *the Lord God of hosts, our everlasting memorial.*

## CHAP. XIII.

### CONTENTS.

*Ephraim is still under reproof in this Chapter. But grace still triumphs in the Lord's victory for Ephraim, over death, hell, and the grave.*

**W**HEN Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, *and* idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

Here is a striking representation made in the character of Ephraim, and which suits all backsliders like Ephraim. First, departures are made with trembling: After falls are in more confidence. Hence the Apostle's kind caution. Heb. iii. 12, 13.

3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

All these figures are strong and expressive, to shew the transiency and emptiness of all things in man's strength, or man's attainment.

4 Yet *I am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.

5 ¶ I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me.

Whoever reads the history of Israel, and observes the Lord's kindness, and carefulness over that people, will enter into the beauty and grace here described, of the Lord's covenant faithfulness. See Deut. xxxii. 7—14. But, Reader! who that reads that history with an eye to Christ; and considers the whole of Israel's eventful pilgrimage as a type and shadow of the Lord Jesus watching over his redeemed, in leading them from the Egypt of sin, to the Canaan of redemption and glory; but must forget every thing of Israel after the flesh, to look with wonder and amazement to the Israel of God after the Spirit! And, Reader! to advance one step higher in the subject of meditation, who that is enabled by the divine teaching of God the Holy Ghost, and by his regenerating grace on the soul, to read the mysterious subject, and discover his own personal interest in it, as it concerns himself; but must feel his soul overwhelmed in the contemplation, and feel constrained to cry out with the astonished disciple; *Lord! how is it that thou hast manifested thyself unto me, and not unto the world?* John xiv. 22. David, under the impression of distinguishing grace, cried out; *I am as a wonder unto me!* And every child of God feels that he is a world of wonders in himself!

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them:

8 I will meet them as a bear *that is bereaved of her whelps*, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

I do not presume to interpret those verses as with an eye to mercy only; no doubt they contain under several similitudes, tokens of the Lord's heavy judgments. But to the *Ephraims* of the Lord, those whom as the Lord had just before said, he knew in the wilderness, is there not reason to hope his judgments are in mercy? The Holy Ghost, though the Comforter, is no less a *spirit of judgment, and a spirit of burning*. Isaiah iv. 4. Rending the caul of the heart is not unsimilar to taking away the heart of stone, and giving an heart of flesh. Reader! remember I do not presume to determine this point. But, when I read the whole of *Hosea's* prophecy together, yea, when I go on to the next verse only, and hear what is there said, methinks I behold such loving-kindness in the Lord, and such gracious expressions from Him, that I feel disposed to cry out with the Prophet, *Who is a God like unto thee, &c.* See Micah vii. 18, 19, 20. Pray turn to Ezekiel before you turn from those verses, chap. xxxvi. 16. to the end.

9 ¶ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.



Oh, what a verse is here! Could it be possible to give a fuller account of the blessed gospel of the ever blessed God in a more comprehensive manner! Israel hath destroyed himself. Yea, so hath every son and daughter of Adam. All men have done so. Every sinner hath done so, and is a soul murderer. Then comes in the remedy, the only remedy; *In me is thy help*. And who is it that thus speaks but the Lord Jesus Christ. See, Reader! how the whole of salvation is brought into a little compass. Here is the great ruin; and here the great relief. Destruction is of ourselves: Salvation is alone in Christ. Oh! for grace to know it, and to find the saving truth to the soul's joy!

10 I will be thy king: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.

12 The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up: his sin *is* hid.

13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he *is* an unwise son; for he should not stay long in *the place of* the breaking forth of children.

All that is here said may be considered as the natural effect of sin, which self-destroyers bring upon themselves. Here is an allusion perhaps to Israel's history, in the case of Saul, king of Israel, whom the Lord appointed, and also rejected. See 1 Sam. xv. 23. But the subject is general, and by no means limited to any age or period. The idea of a travailing woman, and the breaking forth of children, may probably have a reference to the soul travail under conviction of sin. The holy scriptures make use of this figure upon several occasions. Isaiah xxvi. 18. John xvi. 21.

14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

We can have no difficulty in discovering the blessed sense of this glorious verse; neither of the Almighty Speaker of it; since the Apostle Paul was taught it by God the Holy Ghost, to instruct the Church. 1 Cor. xv. 55. And while we behold the Lord Jesus thus speaking by his servant the Prophet to this purport, so many hundred years before his incarnation, and accomplishing the whole by his resurrection and triumph over death, hell, and the grave; surely we cannot but take part in the glorious tidings to our nature, convinced that both in his victories *for* his people, and his conquests *in* his

people; never will he recall his mercies, nor repent in the salvation of his redeemed, and the everlasting destruction of his foes.

15 ¶ Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

16 Samaria shall become desolate: for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

Some have thought that it is the Lord Jesus Christ that is spoken of as fruitful among his brethren. And no doubt Christ is abundantly fruitful, as Jacob prophesied of him, as a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall. Gen. xlix. 22. But this cannot be spoken of Christ, because it follows that his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. And as Samaria, which was the chief city of Ephraim, is also said to be desolate, it should seem to be rather a reference to Ephraim, who was fruitful among Israel's children; see Gen. xlviii. 17, 18, 19.

#### REFLECTIONS.

AMIDST numberless beauties which this Chapter furnisheth for the most blessed improvements under grace; methinks I would attend to what my Lord hath said concerning his ransom of his people from the power of the grave, as eminently important; and indeed as including all blessings in one. For if Jesus hath indeed in his own glorious person, conquered both sin, and death, and hell! (as that he hath most assuredly,) in that victory all his people are implicated, and interested in all his triumphs. And as under the Holy Ghost's teachings, every believing soul is led to see the truth of what the Lord hath said in this Chapter; *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*; it must be blessed indeed to be equally convinced of what the Lord saith, *in me is thine help*. Look up then my soul, look up Reader, and hear thy Redeemer's well known voice, when he declares that he hath ransomed his people from the power of the grave, and redeemed them from death. And hath he not most completely and most effectually done it, by the assumption of our nature, and in that nature vanquished death by his own death, and subdued the dominion of the grave in arising from the grave in the triumphs of his cross? Hath he not done all this, as the head of his body the Church, and in our nature opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers? He hath paid our ransom with his blood. He hath answered the whole demands of divine justice by his righteousness. He hath shewn the satisfaction wrought out, and made to all the Father's

perfections. And as it was impossible that the grave should detain such a prisoner, so is it impossible that any of his seed, for whom he hath purchased redemption, should remain in the prison of the grave; for he hath said, *because I live, ye shall live also.* Hail! thou glorious Lord! thou art indeed the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in thee, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in thee shall never die. Well may every faithful child of God cry out in the triumphant voice of the Apostle, *thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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## CHAP. XIV.

### CONTENTS.

*In this Chapter the man of God closeth his prophecy, in the sweetest and tenderest expressions of the Lord's grace and mercy. Israel is shewn his fall by nature; and the richest promises follow of grace.*

**O** ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are our gods*: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

We may divide this Chapter into *three* grand parts. The *first*, in which the Holy Ghost points out to Israel his fall, and shews what method he is to take in seeking to the Lord for a recovery. The *second* sets forth the Lord's gracious assurances of pardon, mercy, and peace. And the *third* represents the blessed effects which take place in the soul, when the Lord hath given grace and faith, and is pacified to Israel for all the evil that he hath done, in the rich salvation of the Lord. These three verses contain the *first* of those doctrines. The Chapter begins with a faithful account of Israel's fall, and as gracious a call to return. And the method to be adopted is shewn in coming to the Lord, with an earnest petition for the Lord to take away all iniquity. Reader! mark this method of every sinner's return, for it is the Lord's own method. We cannot come to the Lord after our fall, until the Lord first come to us. We cannot say any thing to the Lord, but what the Lord hath first said to us. *If we love him, it is because he first loved us.* And how very blessed it is to behold the workings of the Holy Ghost in the heart, when the poor penitent comes to the footstool of the mercy-seat, renouncing all self-righteousness, all the *Ashures* of created excellency, and laying low

and humble at the foot of the cross, crying out, *Lord save, or I perish!*

4 ¶ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon.

Here we have the *second* division of the Chapter, in a cluster of the richest promises. Reader! contemplate the Lord Jesus in all these precious things, (for He is the speaker,) and oh! for grace, that both you and I may see and know our own personal interest in them, for they are most blessed. Jesus will heal the backslidings of his people. His blood cleanseth from all sin. And he will do it freely. His love is not the result of our prayers, but his own free grace. It comes from himself, and of himself. He doth love, and he will love. This is the only cause. And he will be as the dew unto Israel, that is, as another Prophet explains, *which waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men.* So free, unmerited, unexpected; so great and copious as the innumerable drops of the morning; and so blessed as the fruitful showers on the earth. And the sweet effects wrought on Israel's mind thereby, shall be like that of the lily, whose roots lie deep, and even in winter still sends forth her shootings; so the lives of God's people, which lie hid with Christ in God, shall be ever green, and which no wintry seasons can destroy. And as the cedar of Lebanon spreads forth her branches in majesty; so in Christ, his people stretch forth, on the right hand and on the left, with a smell as fragrant as the spices; and the sweet scented odour of Jesus' name is in them like *ointment poured forth.* For dwelling under Christ's shadow, every thing shall partake of his fragrancy. And they shall grow as the branches of the vine, which though unpromising, and apparently like a dry stick, produceth the richest and most luxuriant branches, like the grapes of *Eshcol*: or like the corn, which the more it is trodden down, the more it revives and brings forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty fold, some an hundred fold. Precious Lord Jesus! who that considers thy loveliness, and the blessedness of thy people in thee, but must cry out with the Church, *my beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.* Song i. 14.

8 Ephraim *shall say*, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir-tree: from me is thy fruit found.

9 Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Here we have the *third* great branch of doctrine in this most delightful Chapter; namely, the sweet and sure effects of grace, when that grace is inwrought by the Holy Ghost in the heart. And such will be the blessed consequences on all truly regenerated and penitent sinners. Therefore God the Holy Ghost closeth this prophecy with a peculiar note of the most important nature, that every one who is made wise unto salvation, may ponder over the whole, and duly consider the blessed doctrine contained therein: putting his Almighty emphasis upon it, that all God's ways are right ways, and which every justified sinner in Christ shall walk in. But while it proves the savor of life unto life to all such, to transgressors it becomes a stumbling stone, and rock of offence, so that they fall therein, and see not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hand.

#### REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED be God for the sweet and precious doctrines contained in this Chapter. May God the Holy Ghost write their full import on the heart both of Writer and Reader. I would pray for grace to see my own state described in the first part of it. Indeed every child of God may truly exclaim, I am the man that hath fallen by my iniquity. The Lord help me therefore to take with me words, even God's own words, and come to the throne of grace, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and find grace, mercy, and peace from Him, in whom the fatherless findeth mercy.

And oh! thou blessed Emmanuel! speak to my soul, yea, speak to every regenerated soul in those reviving words of thine, *I will heal thy backsliding; I will love thee freely; I will be as the dew unto Israel!*

And do thou grant, oh! thou blessed Spirit of truth, in thy sweet office of glorifying the Lord Jesus, that through thy gracious influences I may be kept from any more going after my former idols. Yea, give me to see that Jesus is the source of all my strength, hope, and consolations; that in Him is my fruit found, and all my fresh springs are in Him.

Farewell *Hosea!* adieu thou faithful servant of the Lord! Well hast thou ministered to the Church by thy writings in all ages, from thy days to the present hour; and shewn in what man's ruin is found, and in whom alone is salvation. And while I bless the Great Head

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of his Church for thy ministry : my soul desires to go forth in thanksgivings and praises to the Lord God, in whom alone thy ministry, or all the ministry of men or angels can be profitable; in that Jesus doth bless, and will bless his holy word by his servants the prophets. Praises be to Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for those blessed writings of inspiration! May the Lord go on to commission them to his glory, who in times past *spoke to the Fathers by the Prophets*. But still more would we give praises to God, who hath in these last days *spoken to us by his Son*. Oh! thou Lord God of the Prophets! everlasting blessings be thine, to whom all the Prophets give witness, that *whosoever believeth in thee, shall have eternal life*. Amen.

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## THE

## PROPHET JOEL.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE prophecy of *Joel* is but short; but if it were only from one passage in it, which hath respect to gospel days, and was interpreted by an Apostle with peculiar reference to the open descent of the Holy Ghost, after the ascension of Christ, it would form a precious portion of the spirit of prophecy. *And the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*.

The name *Joel* is significant: it appears to be a compound of Jah and El; that is, the Lord God. We have no account of this Prophet's descent or connection further back than his immediate father. Neither can it be determined with any exactness, the period in which he prophesied. Probably, somewhat about eight hundred years before the coming of Christ. But we are much more interested to trace the evident marks of inspiration in Joel's writings, than to be particular as to the time in which he delivered his commission. I only detain the Reader with my usual precaution on entering any and every inspired writing; namely, to be careful to implore that Almighty God that guided the Prophet's pen, to influence every Reader's heart, that since to Jesus *all the Prophets give witness*, we may receive the truth in the love of it, and *the truth may make us free*. May the Lord God of the Prophets thus graciously do both by Writer and Reader in the present record now opening before us, *to make us wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus*. Amen.