

THE LIFE AND PROPHECIES OF HOSEA

By

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In the hope that it will stimulate interest in one of the most unique characters of Sacred Writ, and that it will lead to powerful sermons from this Prophet's suggestive texts, this little volume is presented to laymen and clergymen alike.

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I.

Hosea's Place in the Canon.

Hosea stands first in the book of the Minor Prophets, which the uninitiated would suppose to be arranged in chronological order. That Hosea exercised the prophetic office longer than either Joel or Amos may account for his being placed first in the canon. Biblical criticism, the subjects treated, and the nature of their treatment make it clear that the Biblical order of the Twelve Prophets is no more than a rough approximation of their real dates. Amos antedates Hosea by at least five or ten years. He (Amos) is the first of the new order of Prophets, and makes its first literature.

While we may not be able to affirm that Hosea quotes from Amos, it is clear that his historical allusions are of a later date, and that the dissolution of the kingdom of Israel and its threatened doom

were closer at hand than when Amos wrote. Perhaps we may affirm with a degree of certainty that the early part of Hosea's ministry was contemporary with the close of that of Amos.

Amos exercises the office during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. Evidences of prosperity and luxury are everywhere to be seen; as yet no clouds are visible to the eyes of the uninspired, or thoughtless pleasure seekers; but when Hosea writes, clouds have begun to gather upon Israel's horizon: they thicken and lower into a threatening storm. Israel sees the storm, and for help cries not to God—*"They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria," "they strike a bargain with Assyria, and carry oil to Egypt."* (Isa. 30:6.)

Hosea and Amos represent the opposite extremes of the same order of prophecy.

Amos is the prophet of Law; Hosea the prophet of Love. Religion ever moves between these two—Law and Love. Amos sees God's will worked out regardless of the disposition and tricks of the people. His climaxes all end in doom. Cause and effect are the guides of his inspired pen,

“Violated law reasserts itself in punishment; the people have violated law, therefore they must suffer,” is the essence of his doctrine.

Hosea is better conversant with the temperament of his fickle and unstable people. Moreover, he has had a taste of love and knows what it is. His great swelling heart of love prompts the hope of repentance by which redemption would be sure.

He had learned how to forgive: that experience becomes the basis of his gospel. He recognizes the reign of law; but it is not supreme. With him love is supreme—rules the world. Love forms the climax of his speeches. Amos preaches to the conscience. He makes out a terrible bill of indictment against the people; but makes little effort to lead them to repentance. Grace, love and mercy appear in his prophecy, it is true; but with the belief that they have already been exhausted: “You, alone, have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you your iniquities.”

Hosea is the preacher of repentance. He, too, indicts the nations, accuses the people of the terriblest of sins,—sin against love; yet there is hope; grace and pardon are still to be found. *“Come and let us return to Jehovah.” “O Israel, thou hast destroyed*

thyself, but in me is thy help." *"I will be thy king."* *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death."*

**Hosea Grapples
With the Problems
left by Amos.**

Amos had shocked and awed the nation by his rugged daring and bold effrontery. It was the mission of Hosea to be "the persuasive preacher of righteousness." The Doomster of Israel had spoken and disappeared. His proclamation hung threatening over the nation,—a sphinx, a riddle that would only yield its tale to love. Hosea furnished this element. He affirmed that Love was superior to Law; he assured them that, though the people were doomed by reason of their immoralities, yet redemption could be worked out by a process just as reasonable as that by which their doom had been made imminent, repentance and leal love. He is the evangelical prophet; indeed, his teachings form the basis of the New Testament doctrine of grace.

**Points of
Similarity.**

Though Amos and Hosea are unlike in many things, still there are many striking points of likeness in their writings, notably, their aversion for

cheap sentimentality and their hatred for religious ecstasy. Unbridled ecstasy is always dangerous to the moral and intellectual sides of religion. This element predominated in the false hireling prophets who toadied to the fancy of the king and people. Remembering this, we can understand why Amos cut himself off from the regulation prophetic rank, and inaugurated a new order of prophecy. When ordered to leave Israel and go prophesy in Judah and earn his bread, he retorted, "No prophet I, nor a prophet's son." This will also help us to understand why Hosea placed such stress upon the moral and intellectual sides of religion, "My people perish for lack of knowledge," etc.

Prediction of the future is the subordinate element in all prophecy. Its mission is to declare the will and character of God in connection with some occasion or crisis in the history of the people. This characteristic of prophecy is strikingly emphasized by the two prophets under consideration. Moses prayed, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29). It is in this spirit that they prophesy: that any righteous, spiritual, manly man could see the doom of Is-

rael and should warn them of that doom,—that the message is laid upon them by God's Spirit. "The Lord has spoken, I can but prophesy." "No prophet I, nor a prophet's son;" yet I must speak out, because the Lord has spoken from His holy mountain.

It is only in this spirit that mortal man should take upon himself the office of the ministry. He should not enter the ministerial rank unless he feels "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ."

II.

The Story of the Faithless Wife.

- Hosea i:iii.

A Strange Story. This is a strange, blunt story of a tragedy in a home, and of its bearing upon the life of a nation. We marvel at the faithfulness with which it is recorded by the very individual who suffered the agony, humiliation and shame. While it is exceedingly plain in its narration of horrible facts, yet the purest maiden and most modest matron need not blush at its startling revelations. It is a way the Bible has of

exposing the terrible hatefulness of sin, and of magnifying the power of God's love to redeem. The Bible never shuns realism nor eschews the plainest, bluntest figure if the sinfulness of sin may be made known, or the power of God's love may be exalted thereby. Bible pictures are painted from real life and are true to their original—scars, wrinkles and all. This is done, not for the purpose of exposing an ugly picture, but that the very ugliness of the picture may stand as a warning to others, and serve the will of God.

**The Story
Related.**

The story and its meaning are related in the first three chapters of I:I-9 to III:I-3. Hosea. Plain and startling is the story.

Deep and pregnant with providential lessons is the meaning thereof. "*The beginning of the word of the Lord to Hosea. And the Lord said unto Hosea, Go take unto thee a wife of harlotry.*" He obeyed the command, "*and went and took Gomer, daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived and bare him a son. And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel (My-own, yet-to-be-scattered), for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the*

house of Jehn." *"And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And the Lord said unto him, call her name Loruhamah" (Unloved. Never-knew-a-father's-pity). She conceived again and bare a son. "Then said God, call his name Lo-ammi (Not-my-People)."*

The names of the prophet's last two children are names of ill omen. They mark the rise of domestic suspicion and portend the dissolution of the home. They also vaguely mark the time that elapsed before the husband discovers his shame, and suggest the thought that the husband must have labored zealously to reform the erring wife. But all efforts at reformation failed and separation followed (Ch. ii:1-5). How long they were estranged he does not tell us; but the woman ran her course of shame and became a slave. Then came the message of Jehovah once more: *"Go love a wife that is loved of a paramour, and is an adulteress."* (Ch. iii). In obedience to the divine will, Hosea seek a reconciliation with the erring woman. *"So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and an homer of barley and an half homer of barley."* *"And I said to her, For many days thou shalt abide alone, thou shalt not play the harlot and thou shalt not be for any man, and I*

also shall be so towards thee." These, evidently, were intended as days of penitence and discipline, a sort of atonement and purification, and to impress her that she could not yet, if ever, be the same to him that she was in the days before the jewel of virtue was destroyed.

**Meaning of the
Tragedy—It
Deepens.**

It is made clear to the man of God that reconciliation is the Divine Will. The evil omen of their children's names is eliminated. *Loruhamah*, Unpitied, becomes *Ruhamah*, pitied; *Loammī*, Not-My-Child, becomes *Ammī*, My-Child,—prophetic of the re-establishment of the home and of the restoration of the wife to favor with the husband.

It is here and now that the prophet learns that the tragedy of his home found its counterpart in the life of the nation, that his grief over his domestic trouble expressed to him in a faint way, at least, the sorrow of Jehovah over the harlotry of Israel. The first fruits of Israel, like those of his wife, had been legitimate appreciation and loyal service and devotion. In the course of time she turned away and sought the Gods of Egypt, Assyria and Phoenicia.

The great love of God was grieved and wounded. In His own way He had prepared His messenger to deliver the gospel of His amazing love. No doubt the messenger had not known the purpose of God when he was so strangely led into a matrimonial alliance with Gomer, who proved so false and unchaste. But looking about him now, he observed that thousands of homes in Israel were like his own. His domestic life then partook of a national aspect. Out of his pain and sorrow he comes to an appreciation of the pain and sorrow of Jehovah over the sins of the unfaithful nation. Then it was that he lost sight of his own sorrow in the vaster contemplation of national trouble, and his own grief became the vehicle to convey his conception of the grief of Jehovah. He remembered the marriage of Jehovah and Israel in the wilderness and that the lapse and declension came when Israel had settled in the home given her by God, and that said lapse was due to the discovery of other gods. Human logic would next lead to separation and divorce of the spouse (Israel); but Jehovah is God and not man. God puts into the mouth of His servant the pathetic words, "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim. How shall I surrender thee, O Israel?*"

**The Time
of the
"Beginning of
the Word."
Made Known
to Hosea.**

In the light of the foregoing consideration, it becomes clear that Hosea did not at the time of his marriage interpret that event to be the "beginning of the word of the Lord" to him, nor had it been made plain to him at the time of the divorcement. But when Jehovah refused to divorce the nation for her sins and kept pleading with such passionate love for her return, the riddle of the prophet's life was solved and duty was made plain. He then sought to redeem his wife, and made his experience the basis of his gospel.

How, then, may we reconcile this view with the command so plainly expressed, "*Go take unto thee a wife of harlotry*" (1:2)? And how may we make it harmonize with the reasons recorded immediately after the command, "*For the land has committed great harlotry departing from the Lord,*" etc? "In this way—When, some years after his marriage, Hosea at last began to be aware of the character of her whom he had taken to his home, and while he still brooded upon it, God revealed to him why He who knoweth all things from

the beginning had suffered His servant to marry such a woman; and Hosea, by a very natural anticipation, in which he is imitated by other prophets (Isa. vi. and Jeremiah xxxiii:8), pushed back his own knowledge of God's purpose to the date when that purpose began actually to be fulfilled, the day of his betrothal. This, though he was all unconscious of its fatal future, had been to Hosea the beginning of the word of the Lord. On that uncertain voyage he had sailed with sealed orders."

Thus does Dr. Adam Smith paraphrase Robertson Smith.

Or if we may be allowed to state it differently, the prophet did not commit his strange domestic experience to writing when it actually occurred, but after its meaning had been made plain to him, and he and his wife reconciled. So he crowded the early experiences and later revelations into one bold statement and labelled it "the beginning of the word of the Lord to Hosea."

True to Life. Different interpretations have been given by Kuenen, Matthew Henry and many others of less note; but the one given above is supported by good au-

thority, and is the most natural. It is true to life, and can be matched from the experience of every true Christian. What is the meaning of sorrow any way? Does it not always bring to the true child of God the message of helpfulness to others? When we grieve over those who have wronged and humiliated us, may we not look up and understand the bleeding hands and heart, and interpret the great lines of sorrow in the face of Him who weeps over the sins of the world. Verily this is true as our own experience attests. Sorrow sanctified will make our lives a more potent influence for good. We cannot give the right ring to the messages of love and consolation which the world so much needs until we have tested and conquered the bitterness of sorrow. Christ himself was first touched with a feeling of our infirmities and then His mission to men was fulfilled.

When and where is "the beginning of the word of the Lord" to any of His children? Is it at the time when the meaning of our sorrow is first made known to us, or when we first find symbols in which to express it to others? It lies far behind that—in mysterious facts, in dark and deadening experiences which we may now understand; but which at the time of their

visitation formed the enigma of our lives. This is true of all the relations of life. At first these strange, unbidden visitations fall upon our fond hopes and aspirations like cold clods upon the coffins of those we love; but at last they are made as clear as the bright shining of the day, and become the clarion call of God to our souls. "This is most true of the love which meets a man as it met Hosea in his opening manhood." How many a mother had never thought of heaven until her darling babe was taken to the Savior's arms! How many a reformer was never moved to action until the faces and character of his own loved ones were stained and blackened by the vice which he at last opposed! It was the terrible crucible through which he had passed that made Hosea the unmatched preacher of repentance, leal love and righteousness. Sorrow and discipline will bring out the best in man. When anguish gives way to sympathy and mystery becomes a stimulus to a mission, the grief has done its perfect work, and the man is fitted for the duties of life.

Parallels and Applications. The remaining portions of chapters i to iii are devoted to sententious pleadings and applications of the lessons learned to the life of

Israel. The analogy is very striking and complete. Hosea, whose name means Savior, typifies Jehovah in His grief over His spouse. Gomer in her domestic infidelity typifies the nation, Ephraim in her national idolatry. Gomer's paramour represents the idol gods which Israel had followed, and the children represent the result of the nation's sin, a weak and unholy generation with the displeasure of Jehovah upon them. Gomer was redeemed with a price. God offered His love, yea, His Son as the price of Israel's redemption. But before Israel's redemption she must be scattered, made a slave, and left without a king. So the parallel runs, *"I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver. * * * * * And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide alone many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for any man, and I shall not be for thee. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince and without a sacrifice, and and without a teraphim. 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."*

Thus the first section of this strange book comes to a close.

III.

Darkness and Gloom, With Here and There a Ray of Light.

Chapters 4 and 14 cannot be clearly divided into sections. The mists and shadows of Israel's threatened doom pass before the prophet's bewildered vision in panoramic rapidity.

He gazes in pity and anxiety upon the lurid phantoms of despair that pass in rapid review over a leaden sky bedecked only here and there with a star of hope. He clutches and welcomes every ray of light that is thrown upon the horizon of the nation. Yet, he remains true to his mission and paints in bold relief the dark side of the picture, arching it with the glorious law of promise, based upon love and righteous conduct. In these alone is the hope of the nation to be found. The splendid past of the nation is fading from view, merging into a memory, crumbling into chaos and confusion. "And as decay has no climax and ruin no rhythm so we may understand why it is impossible to divide with any certainty Hosea's record of Israel's fall."

But there are certain leading ideas which stand out in bold relief. These we shall attempt to treat in the order in which they occur in the narration with but little regard to their logical sequence, grouping around them some of the minor thoughts, with an added word upon the more prominent ethical and doctrinal points. This will lead us through devious paths and fetid swamps, but finally into a gladsome land illumined by the glorious prophetic light of a nation reconciled to God. The following themes and thoughts will pass before us for a brief review: (1) The Moral and Political Decay of the Nation (iv-x). (2) The Fatherhood, Love and Humanity of God (xi). (3) A Catalogue of Crimes (xii). (4) Threatenings and Promises (xiii-xiv). (5) Knowledge the Basis of Repentance.

(1)

The Moral and Political Decay of the Nation.

Hosea iv-x.

Following the plan outlined above, we now come to that part of the prophet's treatise which has as its most prominent thought the moral and political decay of the nation. The thread of the discourse is bad-

ly broken. Like the mountain stream, short brooklets run in here and there, but are all carried forward by the one stream to the great ocean,—the thought that is uppermost in the prophet's mind,—the wreck of the nation. The story of the faithless wife served as the symbol and parable. The symbol is now to be given its literal meaning, and the parable to be made plain.

Hear the word of the
Jehovah's Con- Lord, children of Israel,
troversy With for Jehovah has a con-
the Inhabitants. troversy with the in-
 habitants of the land.

What is the ground of Jehovah's indictment? "*Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out and blood toucheth blood.*" Furthermore, the counsel of the priests has been rejected, knowledge spurned, idol gods embraced. "*You sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains*" to man-made gods, which are not gods.

We have pictured here a moral, intellectual and spiritual condition that would prove to be the gangrene of any race or nation. Immorality destroys the brain. Intellect-

ual ignorance will pollute and fill with the virus of death and decay the spiritual streams that form the life blood of any nation, and nothing so soon begets intellectual ignorance as immorality and vice.

Priests and Princes Fallen. Whenever a people rejects the priesthood of knowledge "and heaps unto themselves teachers, having itching ears," the dissolution and degradation of that people are not far distant. It was for lack of knowledge that Israel was doomed to destruction, and the priests, whose lips should ever keep wisdom, had been drawn into the great whirlpool of social corruption with the people. When there were priests who did their duty, they were rejected by the people; and now they, with the people, reject the knowledge of God. So the sentence comes, "*Because thou hast rejected knowledge I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no priest unto me.*" This is a terrible and hopeless state of affairs,—when the ecclesiastical and political rulers have become as the commonest sinners, when they rejoice in the iniquity of the people and are made glad with bottles of wine and flattering lies. There can be no hope for such a social or-

ganism, for there is no basis for reform. No statesmanship in the land, no preachers of righteousness.—From whence may we expect the forces that reform? from the avenging, purging fires of affliction and that alone. But even these fail here. Defeat and impoverishment had followed in the wake of their social corruption. The kingdom was falling apart under the constant hammering of the enemy. The death sickness had already set in. Upon the brow of the nation the beads of a fatal perspiration could now be seen. *“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.”* What amazing perversity! What monumental folly that a people whose social and political security had from the dawn of history rested in their separateness from other nations, should now seek such entangling alliances!

God entreated, warned, and threatened the nation with terrible calamities. He would be **Light Hearted** unto Ephraim *“as a lion and as a young lion to the house of Judah.”* He would **Repentance.**

"withdraw himself from them." He would *"return unto His place,"* retire into His unapproachable heavens to make them feel the need of Him. But these light, silly, flippant optimistic children do not take it seriously. They trifle with the Deity. Entrenched in egotism and pride and the memory of so many favors, they reason that God has only torn them that He may heal them, and has thrown them down that He may take them up again in a day or two, *"As soon as we seek him we shall find Him."* *"It is a very small matter, any way."*

"Come and let us return to Jehovah:

*For He hath rent, that he may heal us,
And hath wounded, that he may bind us
up.*

*He will bring us to life in a couple of
days;*

*On the third day He will raise us up again,
That we may live in His presence.*

*Let us know, let us follow up to know
Jehovah:*

As soon as we seek Him we shall find Him.

*And He shall come to us like the winter-
rain,*

Like the spring-rain pouring on the land!"

God answers this beautiful prayer, and assures them that he has no faith in such idle words. They had made such promises before and He remembers their backslidings of old. So He cries, "*Oh Ephriam, what shall I do unto thee? * * * for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*" Such cheap sentimental repentance, such light appreciation was an unholy odor in the nostrils of Jehovah. For He desireth mercy and truth and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

There can be no misunderstanding of the meaning and portent of the above signs. The reading is plain and the interpretation sure. It is the Mene Tekel of the nation. Impurity in the family, immorality in the priesthood, theft and murder in society, debauchery on the throne! No nation can maintain its prestige abroad with such conditions at home.

The prophet now (vii:9) makes a transition, leaves off considering the domestic condition and proceeds to lay bare the foreign and political condition of the nation.

Verse eight of chapter seven forms the connecting link between these two thoughts,

the domestic decay and the political decay.

"Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the people;

Ephraim is a cake not turned."

It is the last clause that satirizes the domestic condition of the people, while the first clause with equal force strikes on the political condition of the nation.

The key, a fitting text for the foregoing discussion (iv-vii:8), can be found in the words *"Ephraim is a cake not turned."* What more fitting simile could be employed to express the one-sided immoral life of a fickle people! *"A cake not turned,"* burned on one side, raw on the other, hence only fit to be cast away. Thus it was with Israel's domestic life. They would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Scrupulous as to the observance of ritual and fasts, but lamentably lax as to morals and true religion.

Erring Kings. *"Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the people."* These words

form the key to that part of the indictment which follows (vii:8-x), the political blunders and their consequent punishment. It is very singular that from the time of

the revolt at Shechem Israel was guilty of one political blunder after another. During the 250 years of the kingdom's existence, not a single good king wielded the royal scepter. It was conspicuous for its idolatry and entangling alliances. In the national life of Israel there are four periods that stand out clear and plain, each of which is marked by the strong personality of the most prominent king of that period. In the first period the most conspicuous king was Jeroboam, the revolter; in the second, Ahab, the wicked king; in the third, Jehu, somewhat of a reformer, and in the fourth, Pekah, the royal assassin. During the first period, idolatry took root, Bethel and Dan came into prominence; during the second, it was in full bloom under the furious and fanatical leading of Jezebel, wife of the king; during the third, it was held somewhat in abeyance through the influence of the prophets. The rugged Elijah flourished here. During the fourth period, idolatry produced its natural fruit, the utter dissolution and destruction of the kingdom. It is the political side of this last period that now passes before us for a brief review.

Political**Alliances.**

Political alliances with other nations were forbidden Israel by the clear word of God. But there was no balm in Gilead. Internal corruption, the fires of national vitality burning low, all spelled out to the nation the death warrant of its existence. They saw the threatening cloud that lowered and gathered around them. They saw their wound, the fatal sore of the kingdom; "*But when Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound then went Ephraim to the Assyrian and sent to King Jareb.*"

There was no statesmanship nor self-reliance at home, hence the application to others for aid. They accepted the proffered treaties of peace and amity, which in the long run cost the nation very dearly. Thus it was said that strangers devoured their strength and they knew it not; and grey hairs, the sign of declining life, were upon them; but they ignored their presence and the warning which they gave. But like a silly dove the nation continued to multiply evil by its alliances with other nations.

Acknowledged enemies and professing friends—all preyed upon the confused people. They paid tribute to Assyria, carried

oil to Egypt and at the same time fought their battles at home.

**Man-made Kings
and Hand-made
Gods.**

Passing over many of the minor allusions and complaints of the prophet, we now come to the main targets of his indignant scorn, viz., Israel's weakling kings and idol gods. *"They have set up kings but not by me. Of their silver and their gold have they made idols that they may be cut off."* *"Thy calf, O Samaria, hast cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them. * * The workman made them; therefore they are not God"* (Cn. viii-4-13).

Hosea follows this with a brief statement of the effects of the exile. During that dark and terrible time their gods would be put to the test and would fail them. The nation would sink deeper and deeper into the cesspool of sin. Though they had been like grapes in the wilderness (ix:10), their glory shall fly away like a bird from the birth, and from the womb and from the conception (ix:11). Indeed, *"My God will"* (utterly) *"cast them away."* In chapter x the prophet again turns to the main target of his scorn, the nation's idols

and the people's kings. The nation shall have no king, and the altars shall be broken down.

These must have been **Terrible Times.** terrible times. There was no stalk nor fibre to the nation. There was no national hero nor towering personality to influence the nation for good. Those who "rose to prominence, rose not upon the nation; but only on the fevered and transient impulse of some faction." Their leaders were not from God; but were man-made, and soon man-murdered. It is very singular, as has been said, that not one of the kings of Israel was a godly man. Their withdrawal from Judah was never blessed by God. Few histories of royal families are more tragic than that of Israel. While all of Israel's kings were more or less wicked, those who reigned just prior to, during and after Hosea's day were singularly conspicuous for their reckless wickedness. The prophet Hosea commenced his ministry just before the close of Jeroboam's prosperous reign, and for more than sixty years he stood as the great breakwater against the nation's flood of sin. The history of the kings that followed Jeroboam is one of murderers and

LIFE AND PROPHECIES OF HOSEA.

profligates. Zachariah, his son, was openly assassinated after a reign of six months. Shallum, his murderer, reigned one month and was murdered by Menahem, who reigned ten years in Samaria. Pekohiah succeeded him, lasted two years, was stabbed by Pekoh, one of his captains, who reigned twenty years. He was at last murdered by Hoshea. Then tumult and anarchy let loose, and for ten years there was a reign of terror. He reigned nine years, after which the very nation of whom Israel had sought help came up against Samaria and carried the ten tribes away. Of all of this the prophet here warns Israel. *"Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies, therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled.* * * * * *So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off."*



(2)

The Fatherhood and Humanity of God.

Hos. xi.

"As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds may
 spread,

Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

**A Bright Vision
 of the Past.**

From the crooked paths
 and fetid swamps of Is-
 rael's benighted life the
 eleventh chapter breaks
 out clear and sharp like a mountain peak
 against the blue. Israel had been slow to
 learn that God was human as well as divine.
 To them the awfulness and terror of Je-
 hovah was very plain; but the fatherhood,
 love and humanity of God had not been
 made so clear. This may seem very strange
 when we consider the fact that God had
 dealt so tenderly with the nation, leading
 and cheering them, guiding and conquer-
 ing for them. Such stupidity is only
 equalled by the men of to-day who go on
 from time to time enjoying the blessings
 and providence of life without once think-
 ing to honor the source from whence they
 came. But Hosea depicts a bright vision
 of the past in most fervid language to bring

the nation to a knowledge of the fact that God loves and pities Israel even as a father pitieth his children. In this chapter a glorious and indulgent past looms up before the nation, and graves itself upon their memory as with a pen of iron. It is not only a reminder of blessings past, but a prophecy of favors that would come. But the iniquities of the nation had separated between them and their God. Parallel with the Father's kindness had run the nation's ingratitude. Side by side with God's invitations and monitions through His prophets stood the nation's estrangement, insensibility and thanklessness. The more God's messengers called them, the more had they turned a deaf ear to those who were their best advisers and truest friends.

*"When Israel was a child, then I loved him
And called him out of Egypt to be my son.
As they, (the prophets), called them, so
they
Went from them; they sacrificed unto
Baalim and burned incense to graven
images."*

*"I taught Ephraim also to go (to walk),
Taking them by their arms;
But they knew not that I healed them"
(when they fell)*

*"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."*

But Israel could not say,

*"He drew me and I followed on,
 Glad to confess the voice divine,"*

for they were bent to backsliding from Him, and though the prophets called them to the Most High, none of them would exalt Him in their lives.

Love Holds

Debate.

These are words of exceeding tenderness. In them we find discipline not unmixed with love. God is not merely Jehovah, awful and terrible; He is not man, implacable and revengeful. But He is God the Father, keeping the Divine covenant of everlasting love. Though the sins of the people were grievous, He would not come into their city to utterly destroy them. But there must be discipline; punishment must come. Complete annihilation is their due and just desert, but the compassionate and indulgent Father wonders,

*"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?
How shall I deliver thee, Israel?"*

Love finds an answer, tempered with mercy,

*"I will not execute the fierceness of mine
anger,
I will not return to destroy Ephraim,
For God am I, and not man,
The Holy One in the midst of thee" (v. 9).*

But there must be punishment. The logic of the situation demands it. Even God's love cannot ward it off. Crime has been committed, judgment must follow. But what will be the sentence, and what the decree of the court?

*"He shall not return in-
to the land of Egypt;
Pronounced. but the Assyrian shall
be his king, because
they refused to return."*

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

This is a much worse penalty than the one at first pronounced (Ch. viii:13 and ix:3), wherein Jehovah decreed that "*Eph-*

raim shall return to Egypt." Since this first warning, additional crimes had been committed. The warning had fallen unheeded upon their ears. So God, without changing his purpose of punishment, justly changes his mode and will not allow them to return to Egypt; but sentences them to a worse bondage under the Assyrians. Since the days of Menahem they had been tributary to Assyria; but at last grew restive under their galling yoke and applied to Egypt for help, but no help would come. The power of Assyria would still crush them; instead, therefore, of Egyptian masters, which they would much prefer, they should have no choice in the matter; the Assyrian iron yoke should crush them. This poor privilege of returning to Egypt, rather than going to Assyria shall be denied them. Why? "*Because they refused to return.*" That is, they committed additional offences after the first sentence had been pronounced.

The Sentence Executed. We find the execution of this sentence through Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria and ally of Ahaz, King of Judah, when he came up against Pekah, King of Israel and Rezin,

King of Syria, and carried captive to Assyria the inhabitants of Gilead, Galilee and Naphtali. Nearly twenty years later, Shalmaneser besieged Samaria and carried off the remnant of Israel. "Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter."

Glorious

Anticipation.

"Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring out of the earth;
And righteousness shall look down from heaven."

—Ps. 85:10-11.

The remaining verses of the chapter except the last one are filled with glorious anticipations and glowing hopes of what the captivity will do for the nation. His punishment had been a work of love, inflicted with a desire to correct and reform the erring spouse. In the mind of the optimistic and indulgent Father punishment has done its perfect work, and now, "*They shall walk after the Lord. He shall roar, (call), like a lion; when He shall roar then the children shall tremble from the west.*" Tremble because of their precipitate agitation and haste to return to God and their native land.

"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."

But memory spoils the picture, "*Ephraim compasseth me about with lies and Israel with deceit.*" "All of their services, even when they pretended to compass his altar were feigned and hypocritical." "They lied to him with their mouth and flattered him with their tongue." This does not destroy the hope of redemption in the mind of the Father, but grieves Him that they thus slight His love.

This section closes with the eleventh verse of the eleventh chapter. The twelfth verse commences another indictment, and hence belongs to the following section:

(3)

A Catalogue of Crimes.

xi. 12-xii-xiv.

The Weeping Prophet.

Hosea is the weeping prophet of Israel. The crowning thought to all of his climaxes is love.

With him doom has a conspicuous place; but love occupies the higher throne. Thus

far there have been two main climaxes in his prophecy: (1) His marriage, the sin and estrangement, ending in reconciliation as the climax. (2) The moral and political decay of the nation, and consequent doom and judgment, followed by the assurance of the Fatherhood and love of God as the climax. We now come (3) to the prophet's recapitulation of the crimes of Israel, with doom and judgment intertwined; but the prophet, yet loyal to the ruling passion of his soul, looks far beyond the doom and judgment, the captivity and exile, and sees the sunrise of a brighter day, the day of the nation's restoration to love and favor with God.

The Crisis. It is evidently the vision of a brighter day that stimulates the rhetorical and intellectual powers of this bold preacher of righteousness. He realizes that the fatal hour, the hour of the crisis of the nation, is close at hand. The clouds have well nigh obscured the light of day. Is the coming of that hour inevitable? Is there no hope of staying it? While he debates these questions, there passes before his prophetic vision the assurance that though the light of day may be shut out, it will not be

for all time. The dark, thick night of Israel will be followed by a fair morn of sunshine and gladsome joy. He now gathers up all of his reserve force and prophetic fire, and makes one last appeal to the nation's conscience. Hope lingers still; mercy has not flown; even now the nation may repent and turn to God. The trial of argument is to him quite familiar now; but with redoubled earnestness he presses upon the people the claims of Jehovah. But, alas! they will not turn: all hope is in vain: Ephraim is wedded to his idols: like a stupid runaway ass he goes to Assyria. So the faithful prophet to an obstinate people pronounces upon them a doom more awful and blighting than was ever before announced. But doom is never final with him. Judgment is never the last word of Jehovah to his people. Out of discipline and judgment will come joy and gladness. Out of the grave of death will spring a renewed life.

*"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."*

This section, which we have entitled "A Catalogue of Crimes," commences with the last verse of the eleventh chapter, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies and the house of Israel with deceit." This doubtless refers to their half-hearted religious worship. An attempt to provoke them to jealousy follows, "*But Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.*" Judah, though sinful, was never so wicked and idolatrous as Israel.

Now comes a more detailed enumeration of the crimes of the nation,—the following of vain and fleeting hopes, (given in the figure of the wind); covenant relations with Assyria and Egypt; Judah likewise censured.

For a moment the scene changes and the nation is referred to their father Jacob who sinned as they had sinned; but he, unlike them, "wept and made supplication unto Him and prevailed." The Lord is his memorial, and stands ready to forgive, even now, on terms as reasonable as those upon which Jacob found pardon. "Therefore, turn thou unto thy God: Keep mercy and judgment." The prophet again returns to his former task of enumerating the crimes

of the nation, which are as follows: love of oppression; use of false balances; boast of wealth—all unmindful of the fact that wealth has wings, for Jehovah saith, "I will yet make thee dwell in tabernacles as in the days of the solemn feast." They would not hear the prophets, but kept sacrificing in Gilgal, "But I shall make their altars like heaps in the furrows of the field."

Here once again the prophet goes back and gathers the old truths and runs along the old lines,—the glorious past when Ephraim was a power. But idolatry dethroned their reason, and luxury sapped the vitality of the tribe as well as of the nation.

From a literary and rhetorical point of view the two closing chapters are fitting words for the epilogue of a treatise of this character. What delightful ease, and playful yet earnest sarcasm, what force and passion are exhibited here. With what persistence does he ply the self-willed people. Their pride, immoralities and irreligion, their senseless political entanglements, their idol gods and puppet kings, all mark the nation as rotten to the core. These form the targets of his scorn and contempt: pierced by the shafts of ridicule shot by the nimble wits of this veteran marksman, the nation is made ridiculous in the eyes of

civilization. Not one event of history alone, but in one bold statement he summarizes the whole history of the tribe which found its counterpart in that of the nation. Dr. Smith's translation of this statement is as follows: "Whenever Ephraim spake there was trembling: Prince was he in Israel; but he fell into guilt through Ba'al and so—died."

Threatenings and Promises.

Basis of

The Doom.

The foregoing statement is a brief philosophy of the rise and fall of the nation, and forms the basis of the doom that is to follow. It states the cause of which the verses to follow will give the effect. There is nothing more pitiable than the sight of a great man fallen from a high pedestal of prestige and power. As with a man, so with a nation,—the depth of the fall can only be measured by the height of former glory. Others had trembled when Ephraim spake; but their irrational and God-dishonoring conduct has now placed them at the feet of their enemies. Four figures are employed by the prophet to exhibit their destruction: (1) The morning cloud and (2) early dew (13:3) characterize the transient and eva-

nescent character of their goodness and high resolves. (3) The chaff which is whirled away from the threshing floor by the wind, and (4) the smoke which speedily vanishes so soon as it escapes from the chimney, figure the scattering and destruction of the nation.

The sentence will be just, for God had made
the Final Doom. just, for God had made
Preparation for ample provision for
 their happiness and to
 prevent them from stumbling. He had been
 their friend since they left Egypt (v:4).
 In the wilderness He had known them and
 furnished them with green pasture (v:5-6).
 But the bread from heaven and water from
 the smitten rock had only filled their sto-
 machs and satisfied their hunger; they had
 left no thanksgiving in their hearts, nor
 memory of God in their conscience.

The Sentence *"Therefore will I be un-*
Pronounced. *to them as the lion, as*
a leopard by the way
will I observe them: I
will meet them as a bear that is bereaved
of her whelps, and I will rend the caul of
their hearts and there will I devour them
like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.
O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. I

gave thee a king in my anger and took him away in my wrath." (Fit statement of the bloody reigns of Israel's shortlived puppet kings.) *"The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up: his sin is hid. The sorrows of a travelling woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son. * * * * 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."*

Judgment	While Jehovah threatens to make war, he
Accompanied by	still holds out the olive
Offers of Mercy.	branch of peace and the myrtle leaf of friendship.

"In me is thy help: I will be thy king. Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities?" "I will ransom thee," even now "from the power of the grave; I will redeem thee from death."

The condition is easy and simple: *"Oh Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words (instead of sacrifices) and turn to the Lord."* Words are signs of ideas and emotions that struggle in the

soul. Take words, and in the true spirit say, "*Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.*"

Now comes the practical side of Israel's repentance, the fruits meet for repentance,—the renunciation of all hope of safety through Assyria and Egypt. Jehovah asks them to make the promise that they would never again have recourse to Assyria for help nor to Egypt for horses, nor confide again in their man-made gods. This is the confession and renunciation that He puts into their mouth: "*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,*"

Jehovah's Do this, O Israel; come
 in the spirit of these
 words and the answer
 of Jehovah will be after
 this wise:

*"I will heal their backsliding,
 I will love them freely:
 For mine anger is turned away from him.
 I will be as the dew unto Israel:
 He shall grow as the lily,
 And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.
 His branches shall spread,
 And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,*

*And his smell as Lebanon.
 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."*

Then will they be completely cured of their idolatry, for they shall say: "*What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him and observed Him,*" and hence, "*I am like a green fir tree.*"

"Some one has added a summons to later generations to lay this book to heart in the face of their own problems and sins. May we do so for ourselves!"

"Who is wise, that he understands these things.

Intelligent that he knows them?

Yea, straight are the ways of Jehovah,

And the righteous shall walk therein,

But sinners shall stumble upon them."

—xiv :9.

Two Fold

Significance.

That the glorious words that close the book of Hosea have a two-fold meaning is very evident.

It is a characteristic of sacred prophecy that while it may refer primarily to some moral condition or immediate event in the life of the tribe or nation, it also refers to an event farther away, an event of which the former is the shadow, or type. Almost all of the Messianic prophecies can be interpreted in this way. Where deliverance is predicted it may refer to a deliverance close at hand; but its complete consummation is to be found in the Christ that is to come. So in this case, God promises to ransom them from the grave upon certain conditions, upon their repentance and return to Him. They failed to repent, failed to meet the conditions, hence the deliverance would have to come at a more distant date and in some other way. So while Ch. xiv. refers primarily to a conditional immediate redemption, ultimately it refers to the restoration after the captivity.

(5)

Knowledge the Basis.

Knowledge of God forms the key to Hosea's prophecy. It was the fatal lack of Israel. Ignorance was the cause of their sin.

Knowledge is the basis

**Basis of Moral
and
Religious Life.**

of correct moral living.
"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." "Gray hairs are upon them and they know it not."

*"I desired mercy and not sacrifice;
And the knowledge of God more than
burnt offerings."*

Mercy to our fellow man is the effect of which knowledge is the cause. Reasonable service to God in the way of sacrifices and burnt offerings can only spring out of an enlightened conscience. These standing in the relation of cause and effect, produce the highest type of moral and religious manhood.

The laws of civil society enjoin justice to our fellowman, without which communities could not be held together. The laws of our religious being enjoin sacrifices to God and for God, without which our religious nature is stunted and warped. But the well-spring of civic justice and the fountain from which reasonable service flows are rooted in knowledge of God, the Father of the race and Great Architect of our lives.

Mercy to man represents the right state of the heart, and manifests itself in the prac-

tice of deeds of charity, justice and benevolence.

Religious services are our offerings to God in ritual, money, time and song. These three,—Knowledge, Mercy and Offerings to God form the basis of true religion.

The Highest Good.

What is the *summum bonum* of human existence? What is the chief end of man's being?

What is the thing that should be his chief concern? To such questions various answers will be given according to the tastes, training, habits and capacity of the individual. A man representing the lowest type of living would say that life itself and its preservation should be his great concern; others might say health of body and health of mind; still others that the advancement of one's family and the security of their interests are the chief things to be sought. There be some truth in these answers,—there may be much truth in them. But there is something higher and holier, nobler and better than these. The glory of the Creator and the good of the creature must be placed above all else. But to carry out this plan we must know God, through the open book of nature, the volume of His

LIFE AND PROPHECIES OF HOSEA.

Word and his providential dealings with the race.

Basis of Love. Hosea, the greatest prophet of love, places great stress upon knowledge as its basis. The greatest pain of the human heart is that of not being understood by the object of its love. It silences argument, paralyzes influence and stifles love. No man can reason or plead with another who will not come to quarters with his real self. Who can do his best for one who is blind to his best? How can love speak when she is not known as love? God could not successfully reason with Israel, for Israel did not know Him. He could not save Israel, for Israel was blind to the salvation He offered. He could no longer speak with Israel, for Israel misunderstood His love. Hence, the final sentence came: "*My God will cast them away.*" Love retired defeated from the field. Sin had conquered love.

The Basis of Repentance. Love has its terrors as well as its blessings. Defeated and denied the privilege of bestowing the latter, it resorts to the former to bring men to repentance. When love had

ened to reinforce and clothe herself in terror and return to the issue, and when the retired wounded from the field she threat-stupid nation had been sufficiently humbled she would again hold out the olive branch of peace. The prophet reasons that the errant people would then say, "Come let us return unto the Lord," for now they have come to a knowledge of God's love. With Hosea, to return is to repent, and to know is to return. Knowledge, repentance and service go hand in hand.

<p>No Mere Memory of Facts.</p>	<p>But as Isaiah has said, such knowledge does not come by mere hearing without understanding, or seeing without perceiving. But it comes as the result of deep ponderings in heart and soul.</p>
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Religiously speaking, *to know* is not simply to see but to perceive and understand, to be apprehended as well as to apprehend. It is not only an effort of the mind, but an effect upon the mind that makes for righteousness. Such knowledge starts a moral echo in the soul, and is followed by deepest feelings of shame for sins committed, or reverence for goodness known. It is wisdom in the higher affairs of life.

To know another perfectly, and in the highest sense is to hate or love the person known. It was no mere ignorance of facts that beclouded Israel's mind and seared the nation's conscience. They were well acquainted with their past providential history, the events of which were kept green in their memory.

These they had crowned, immortalized at Bethel and Gilgal, at Dan and Beersheba. But Israel was ignorant of the character and purpose of God which shone through these facts with an ever increasing lustre. The bitterest weeping of the prophet was over this fact—ignorance of the real character of God. No mere memory of the past could bring this knowledge to them. The prophet had tried it and failed. Hence Jehovah must desert His faithless spouse and let her feel the harlot's shame and bitter memories of the better past. When this is done He will return and lead her up out of the wilderness and *"they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine"* and *"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?"*

"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."

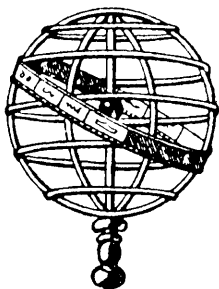
QUESTIONS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION
FROM THE BOOK OF HOSEA.

(The reader who can answer all these questions will be as thoroughly grounded in the Book of Hosea, in all essential points, as if he had studied the Book in a theological school. He will also be surprised to find what a clear insight he gains into the mysteries of other prophecy.)

- 1.—What is Hosea's place in the canon? His relation to Amos?
- 2.—Compare Hosea and Amos. In what do they differ? In what are they alike?
- 3.—Is prediction the chief or subordinate element in prophecy?
- 4.—Relate the story of the faithless wife. The meaning of her children's names.
- 5.—What was the meaning of this story?
- 6.—Did Hosea know the character of his wife when he married her? If not, how came he to state at the first of his book that this was "the beginning of word of the Lord," etc.?
- 7.—Describe the meaning and purpose of sorrow in our lives.
- 8.—Take up the story of Hosea's marriage and trace its analogy to the life of Israel.
- 9.—Why is it difficult to divide chapters 4 to 14 into sections? What divisions does the author make?
- 10.—State some things going to show the moral and political decay of the nation.
- 11.—What four periods stand out distinctly, and what kings reigned in each?
- 12.—What was the effect of alliances with other nations?

- 13.—Describe the times that succeeded the reign of Jeroboam.
- 14.—What change of view does chapter II give?
- 15.—Could God's love avert Israel's punishment?
- 16.—What was the sentence pronounced? How was it executed?
- 17.—What is the general tone of the last part of chapter II? What verse is an exception to this?
- 18.—What is the crowning thought in all Hosea's climaxes? State the three climaxes in his prophecy.
- 19.—Enumerate the crimes of the nation as mentioned by Hosea.
- 20.—Discuss the literary and historical beauty of the last two chapters of Hosea.
- 21.—Under what four figures does the prophet exhibit the destruction of the nation?
- 22.—What is the sentence pronounced?
- 23.—Is any mercy offered? If so, on what condition?
- 24.—What two-fold significance have the closing promises of Hosea? Is this in accord with the characteristics of sacred prophecy?
- 25.—What is the basis of moral and religious life? Quote some confirmatory Scripture.
- 26.—Define summum bonum.
- 27.—What is the summum bonum of human existence? Upon what is it based?
- 28.—What is the basis of love? Show this.
- 29.—What is the basis of repentance?
- 30.—What is meant, religiously speaking, by knowing?
- 31.—Prove this in Israel's case.
- 32.—Write an essay on the Book of Hosea, or a sermon on some passage from the Book.

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