

# Dominion Churchman.

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THURSDAY, NOV. 16, 1876.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

In pursuing the course indicated by the order of the prophetic books of the Old Testament, our first lessons now recur to an earlier period of Israelitish history. The Prophet Hosea gives us one of the last wailings of sadness and sorrow for the people of Israel shortly before the captivity of the ten tribes. It may have been near half a century, or it was probably a much shorter period, when he exclaimed—"The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come . . . They sin more and more . . . 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;" and when in the name of God, he says:—"I will meet them as a bear bereaved, and will rend the caul of their hearts, and there will I tear them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them." From the tenth chapter, the divisions of the people among themselves are spoken of as worse than a foreign war, when they were without a king, as is expressed also in chapter xiii. 11:—"I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." This was, most likely, uttered during the interregnum of twenty years, between the reigns of Jeroboam the second and Zechariah, when the greatest anarchy seems to have prevailed in connection with the grossest conceptions of religion and morality. Even the ultimate accession of Zachariah to the throne had scarcely any effect in allaying these disturbances; and he was himself slain by Shallum in the sixth month of his reign. He was the last king of the house of Jehu; and thus was fulfilled the prediction that the family of Jehu should retain the throne only to the fourth generation. As professor Jahn suggests, the government of Israel had become almost entirely military; and therefore Menahem, general of the army, marched against the new king, and, having defeated and slain him in battle after a reign of thirty days, he mounted the throne himself. Through his influence with the army, he was enabled to subdue the disturbances in the country, which, as we learn from Josephus, he did with a barbarity which would be inexcusable in a foreign

conquerer. These facts will help to explain much that we meet with in the Prophet Hosea.

The language of Hosea is not, however, all complaint, rebuke, and filled with notices of coming evil. A gleam of future good suddenly breaks forth in the words:—"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." And in the last chapter of his prophecy, which is that selected for morning prayer, he contemplates with great brevity, but with the highest rapture, the period when God's anger shall be turned away from Israel, when he will be as the dew unto Israel, and when Israel shall grow as the lily, and send forth his roots as Lebanon; because the people have cast away their idols, have ceased to trust in Asshur, and have turned to Him in whom the fatherless findeth mercy.

Joel prophesied about the same time as Hosea, or perhaps a little after the captivity of the ten tribes; as his admonitions and warnings are addressed entirely to the people of Judah. His exhortations to mourning and fasting on account of the prevalence of iniquity form one of the most remarkable peculiarities of his prophecy. His enunciations of the terribleness of God's judgments are most impressive; and in the directions he gives for repentance and humiliation, when in his most vivid manner, he urges a universal and public expression of contrition, he does not fail to recognize the institution of the priesthood as the ministry appointed by Almighty God Himself to present the supplications of the people in order to secure reconciliation with Heaven. He is as jubilant on the one hand, in contemplating the dispensation of the Spirit, and the future glory of Messiah's kingdom, as he is powerfully impressive in his warnings of the consequences of God's wrath. The latter part of the second chapter is expressly claimed by St. Peter (Acts ii.) as referring to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter days; and the part of the third chapter selected for Even-song, while rich in poetic beauty, presents to us the loftiest conception of the exaltation of the holy race, when "the Lord shall be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

THE COLLECT, like that for the previous Sunday, brings before us the Church in her corporate capacity, as the subject of our most fervent petitions. It is very evident that, in our services, the greatest care is taken to prevent us from losing sight of the fact that our spiritual blessings come to us as members of the Christian organization we call the Church, which is the body of Christ. And although many, in the present enlightened and scientific age, will tell us that they can do just as well in coming to the throne of grace in their

private individual capacity, yet our Church does not think so: our reformers did not think so, any more than did the prophet Joel.

The EPISTLE contains that beautiful passage of St. Paul's to the Philippians, which is designed to show that the Christians' whole deportment, his aims and aspirations are entirely divested of all that is earthly, and altogether correspond with a celestial pedigree and destination:—"For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body," etc. It may be brought into connection with the Collect, which aims at the production of godliness exclusively, and which appropriately views Almighty God as the refuge and strength of His people. St. Paul might well refer to himself and those with him as ensamples, in this renunciation of all that is earthly, and his unremitting progress to every thing pure and heavenly, when in the same chapter he tells us that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. The noble dignity of his high aspirings after the heavenly prize is indeed nowhere else expressed with so much force and clearness as in this chapter; and he who had learned to set so small a value on all earthly things, could most fully appreciate the contrast between the body of our humiliation, and the most glorious body of the Son of God, according to the model of which ours is to be fashioned.

The GOSPEL may in part be viewed as in entire agreement with the teaching contained in the Epistle; and leads us to acquiesce in a great deal that takes place among social and political combinations, while the homage and service due to God are to be sedulously cultivated. The infinite skill with which in a short sentence Christ could baffle His enemies, who vainly imagined they could entangle in his talk, Him in whom dwelt bodily the fulness of omniscience, as well as every other attribute of Divinity, is nowhere so conspicuously exhibited as in the reply:—"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Well might they marvel, leave Him, and go their way! Their ingenuity had been taxed to the utmost in the endeavor to find some way of making him unpopular with the people, or an opposer of the government; and now they retire again in order to contrive some other means of annoying the great fountain of truth with the subtleties they were unable to settle among themselves. The Saviour however, at the conclusion of the chapter, gave them as puzzling a question as they could desire, when he asked them:—"If David then call Him Lord, how is he His Son?" It is not necessary to suppose the Herodians, mentioned in the