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## Studies in Hosea 1-3

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meinde und das Amt sind Korrelate. Alle andern Ämter sind gemeindliche oder kirchliche Einrichtungen, die in der einzelnen Gemeinde Hilfsämter des Pfarramtes, die in der Synode Hilfsämter des Predigtamtes, mit gewissen Einstellungen zu den Pflichten der Einzelgemeinde dem Pfarramte gegenüber.<sup>2)</sup>  
 P. E. F r e s m a n n.

## Studies in Hosea 1—3.

### Chapter I.

V. 2. The beginning of the word of the Lord "by Hosea." The preposition rendered "by," ב, may mean either *to*, as Zech. 1, 9. 14; 2, 2. 7; Num. 12, 8; or *by*, as Num. 12, 2. 6; 1 Kings 2, 28. Here either meaning would suit the context. Since the prophet immediately reports a word which the Lord spoke *to* him, a command given *to* him, ב here may mean "*to*." Since, however, the prophet here speaks of the beginning of his prophetic office, and since in the next clause ("the

2) Schriften und Stellen in Luthers Werken, die bei Behandlung der Frage von Kirche und Amt berücksichtigt worden sind: Von den Konzilien und Kirchen, XVI, 2269 ff.; Antwort auf das überchristliche Buch Emser's, XVIII, 1281 ff. 1347 ff.; Wider die himmlischen Propheten, XX, 282 f.; Vom Papsttum zu Rom, gegen Alsted, XVIII, 1021; Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe, XIX, 1257 ff.; Wie man Kirchendiener wählen und einsetzen soll, X, 1557 f. 1572. 1580 ff.; Wider Hans Wurst, XVII, 1322 ff.; Einleitung zur Offenbarung, XIV, 138; Von der Weichte, ob der Papst Macht habe usw., XIX, 845 ff.; Daß eine christliche Versammlung oder Gemeinde Recht und Macht habe usw., X, 1540 ff.; Große Auslegung des Galaterbriefs, IX, 42 ff. 645 ff.; Antwort auf das Buch des M. Ambrosius Catharinus, XVIII, 1434. 1464 ff.; Großes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Abendmahl, XX, 1101; Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament, XX, 1790 f.; Von Schleichern und Winkelpredigern, XX, 1673. 1664 ff.; Von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche, XIX, 113 f. 117 f.; An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation, X, 314 f. 271; Daß diese Worte: Das ist mein Leib, noch fest stehen, XX, 771 ff.; Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes, X, 229; Vom Papsttum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestiftet, XVII, 1074 f.; Ordnung der Gemeinde zu Leisnig, X, 960. 969 f.; Luthers Antwort auf Heinrich VIII. usw., XIX, 341 f.; Warnung an Lorenz Castner, XX, 1759; Vom Mißbrauch der Messe, XIX, 1097 f.; Daß man die Kinder zur Schule halten solle, X, 424; Schrift von den Schlüsseln, XIX, 950 ff.; Unterricht der Visitatoren, X, 1628 ff.; — aus Predigten und Auslegungen: Eb. des zweiten Weihnachtstages, XI, 152; Joh. 7, VIII, 97 ff.; Matth. 16, 19, VII, 289; Peter-Pauls-Tag, XI, 2311 f. 2304; Prophet Joel, VI, 1628 f.; 20. n. Trin., XI, 1759; Joh. 4, 1, VII, 2129; Pf. 45, 17, V, 468; Psalmen, IV, 1136; 1 Petr. 2, 5, IX, 1173. 1013; Ez. 3, 1, III, 723; Pf. 110, 4, V, 1038 f.; Pf. 82, 4, V, 721; Pf. 45, 10, V, 423; Prov. 7, 27, V, 1517; St. Stephanstag, XI, 2065; Himmelfahrtstag, XI, 970; vgl. XI, 1911. 2304; Joh. 20, 19—31, XI, 746; Röm. 12, 8, XII, 338 f.; Gen. 27, 14, II, 278 f.; — Briefe und Meinungen: Vom Sakrament unter beiderlei Gestalt, XX, 91; Gespräche mit D. Geo. Major, XVII, 1179 f.; gegen sektiererische Geister, XX, 1684; von der Hauskommunion, X, 2224 ff.; an Melancthon, XX, 1014; Weihe eines wahren christlichen Bischofs, XVII, 114; an Eberhard von der Tannen, XX, 1664 ff.; an die neun Männer von Herford, XXI a, 1741; an Hans Honold, XXI b, 1838.

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Lord said to Hosea") <sup>by</sup> is used, I believe that "by" is the better translation. The Lord began to speak by Hosea, made him His spokesman, who by word and deed should make known to his people the word and will of God. Hosea at the very beginning of his book calls attention to the fact that not only the command, v. 2, but all his speeches recorded in this book are not man's words, human speeches, but words of the Lord, as whose mouthpiece Hosea served.

And the Lord said unto Hosea: "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord." Here we are face to face with the question so puzzling to commentators, Did God actually command Hosea to marry an immoral woman? We may distinguish chiefly three classes of interpretations: First, Hosea actually married a harlot. Secondly, the prophet is recording a parable, an allegory, a vision. Thirdly, Gomer was originally a chaste woman and only later turned to immorality.

We hold that the only way to do justice to these words is to accept them as the narrative of an actual occurrence, to wit, that God actually commanded Hosea to take a woman known to be a harlot, to marry her, and to take, to accept as his own those children of harlotry which she would bear while married to him. Hosea was to treat Gomer as if she were his faithful wife, treat the children as if they were his own legitimate children. We shall prove our contention by showing that the objections to interpretation No. 1 are invalid and that valid objections are voiced against the other interpretations.

Various objections have been raised to interpretation No. 1. We list the three most important.

*First Objection.*—Such a command would have been immoral. Says A. B. Dairdam in *Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible*, sub "Hosea": "To suppose that Yahweh would have commanded His prophet to ally himself with a woman already known as of an unchaste life is absurd and monstrous." Hengstenberg, *Christologie*, III, 19, writes: "*Gott selbst kann von seinen Gesetzen nicht lossprechen. Sie sind Ausdruck seines Wesens, Abdruck seiner Heiligkeit. Willkuehr in dieser Beziehung in Gott setzen, heisst zugleich die Idee Gottes und die Idee des Guten vernichten. . . . Es ist undenkbar, dass Gott dem Propheten gleich bei Antritt seines Amts etwas geboten habe, was die segensreiche Fuehrung desselben hindern musste.*"

In answer to this objection we would state that this transaction is *not* immoral. 1) Hosea is not commanded to commit adultery, but to marry a wife, love and honor her as a true, faithful husband loves and honors his spouse. 2) The adultery of the woman is neither excused nor palliated. Rather, the interpretation of the symbol shows that the woman's adultery is regarded as an abomination. See chap. 1, 2; 2, 2—5. 3) The marriage of an Israelite to a harlot was nowhere

forbidden. Only the priest was not permitted to marry a whore or a profane woman, a woman who had been ravished, or a woman put away from her husband; "for he is holy unto his God," Lev. 21, 7. Hosea was not a priest. Duhm's assertion that he was, based on the fact that he mentions priests so frequently, also the Law, 4, 6; 8, 12; unclean things, 9, 3; 5, 3; 6, 10; 9, 10; the Temple, 9, 8, is altogether unwarranted. And Hengstenberg's argument that, if it was sinful for a priest, then even more so for the prophet, carries absolutely no weight. 4) The continuation of this marriage, even after the adultery of Gomer became known to Hosea, was not immoral, since the discontinuation of such a marriage was nowhere commanded. 5) An act is immoral only if it violates a clear command of God, and only to the extent that it violates the command of God. Where there is no command of God, the question of morality cannot enter in. 6) While such a marriage would not be consummated under ordinary circumstances by a prophet, yet, since it was not immoral, there is no reason why God could not in a special instance, for a special purpose, command even this strange, though not immoral, marriage.

*Second Objection.*—This interpretation would not suit the symbolism. "The relation between Hosea and Gomer is said to symbolize the relation between Jahweh and Israel. But it is the view of Hosea that Israel was pure at the beginning of her union with Jahweh and only corrupted herself at a later time. In order to have consistent symbolism, Gomer must have been pure when Hosea married her and must have become corrupt later." (Eiselen, *Proph. Books*, II, 374.)

However, the marriage is nowhere said to symbolize the entire history of Israel. On the contrary, God Himself very clearly and definitely states that this marriage should symbolize the apostasy of Israel and the approaching judgment. "Marry a harlot, for the land is committing, זָנְיָהּ הַזֵּה, great whoredom," the imperfect bringing out the enduring, present state of affairs.

Again, the names of the children, even of the first, are symbolical of the judgment about to overtake Israel, corroborating the view that only a later period in the history of Israel is to be symbolized, that of apostasy and impending judgment.

*Third Objection.*—Such a marriage would not have accomplished its purpose. Speaker's *Commentary on Hosea*, p. 418: "We may further observe that the supposition of Hosea's marriage being an example of acted prophecy (*sermo propheticus realis*) is clogged by the difficulty that symbolical action, to be impressive, would require to be transacted in a brief space of time, so as to present a complete picture at one view, accompanied by its word of exposition. The designed effect would be lost in a transaction going on through a series of years and offering no entire scene to the spectator. Not till the

whole facts were at the last gathered together with the exposition annexed (as in this prophesying), could the lesson taught by them have been apprehended. The *sermo realis* as observed during its actions would have been in itself ineffective; it was the entire narrative alone that could give the lesson. And as the narration would do this just as graphically and effectively if the story was an imaginary one as if the events had been real, the supposition of their reality is as superfluous as it is embarrassing."

In answer we say that, if we can prove our interpretation to be the only correct one, we can safely leave the question of the adequacy of this transaction to God. If He chose this manner of dealing with His people, it certainly was an adequate and effective way. Whether it actually accomplished its purpose is a different matter.

Having shown that the objections to interpretation No. 1 are invalid, let us examine the parabolic, allegorical, and visionary interpretation. This is the interpretation adopted by the Chaldean Targum: "Go and take a wife, i. e., go prophesy against the inhabitants of the idolatrous state." Luther, followed by a number of Lutheran theologians: "The prophet has given to his own chaste wife only the name and deeds of an adulteress, therefore has enacted a sort of play." This is also the opinion of Calvin: "The Lord has placed me here as on a stage that I should tell you I have taken a wife," etc. Hengstenberg rejects the parabolic interpretation, but claims that all this happened in a vision. The whole transaction was merely an inner experience of the prophet. He insists that all names are allegorical. A marriage actually never took place. The reasons which speak against this interpretation follow.

1) There is not the slightest hint of the parabolic character of this transaction. In rejecting the parabolic interpretation, Hengstenberg clearly states that it did eliminate the possibility of distinguishing between parable and history.

2) The moral difficulty is not removed. "If the transaction itself would have been repugnant to the moral sense, is it possible that the prophet would have chosen it as the basis of an allegory?" (Eiselen, *Proph. Books*, Vol. 2, u. 375.) Just as little does Hengstenberg's visionary theory remove the moral difficulty felt by him.

3) While the names of the children are clearly allegorical, since the Lord Himself interprets them so and the names are easily recognized as allegorical, the name of the wife, Gomer, and her mother, Diblaim, defy all efforts at allegorizing. Both names occur only here. Etymologically, Gomer has been explained as a derivation from the root גמר, to complete, finish; cp. Ps. 57, 8; 138, 8; or to be finished, to cease, Ps. 7, 10; 12, 2, etc. Hence Jerome translates "the perfect one"; Raschi, "that fulfilled all evil"; Kimchi, "fulfilment of punishment"; Calvin, "consumption"; Speaker: "Gomer, consummation

(the perfection of a vicious character and the coming to an end in ruin), the wife of Salvation (Hosea), appears a suitable combination to represent Israel as the wife of Jehovah. — בַּת־דִּבְלַיִם has been translated by Hengstenberg "daughter of fig cakes" (which were usually baked in double layers) = *filia deliciarum* = *deliciis dedita*, a daughter of, or given to, delicacies, sensuousness. The dual of Debelah, however, never occurs. The closest approach is Diblathaim, the name of a city, Num. 33, 46 and Jer. 48, 22, which has been regarded by some as the home city of Gomer. Scripture nowhere mentions such layer cakes assumed by Hengstenberg. Others translate "a sweet woman" or "a daughter of idolatry," since fig and raisin cakes were used in idolatrous sacrifices; others derive Diblaim from a word "press" and refer the name to the plumpness of the body. We note that each succeeding interpretation is only a little more far-fetched than its predecessors. Very evidently these two words defy every attempt at allegorizing.

The allegorical interpretation therefore cannot satisfy us. In fact, it has been abandoned quite generally in our day.

There remains the third interpretation: Gomer was at the time of her marriage to Hosea a chaste woman, though inclined to immorality, and only later played the harlot. This interpretation with minor differences in detail is practically universally adopted in our day by all leading commentaries. One example may suffice. We read in the *Expositor's Bible*, Vol. IV, p. 501: "Robertson Smith in *Prophets of Israel* says: 'The struggle of Hosea's shame and grief when he found his wife unfaithful is altogether inconceivable unless his first love had been pure and full of truth in the purity of its object.' How, then, are we to reconcile with this the statement of that command to take a wife of the character so frankly described? In this way — and we owe the interpretation to the same lamented scholar —: 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,<sup>1)</sup> pushed back his own knowl-

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1) "Two instances are usually quoted. The one is Is. 6, where most are agreed that what Isaiah has stated there at his inaugural vision is not only what happened in the earliest moments of his prophetic life, but this spelled out and emphasized by his experience since. The other instance is Jer. 32, 8, where the prophet tells us that he became convinced that the Lord spoke to him on a certain occasion only after a subsequent event proved this to be the case." Yet a closer study of both passages will soon convince the reader that neither passage proves the contention of Smith and the writer of the footnote in *Expositor's*.

edge 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."

The claims made for this interpretation are:—

1) This interpretation does away with the immoral character of Hosea's marriage.— Yet we have seen that there was no immorality involved in Hosea's marriage; hence there is no immorality to be done away with.

2) This interpretation alone is in keeping with the symbolism of the marriage.— We have seen that the symbolism of this marriage according to God's own interpretation is not intended to cover the entire national life of Israel, but only the period of apostasy and idolatry.

3) This interpretation alone does justice to the text.— If the prophet had married a harlot, he would have called her so, *Zonah*. The expression employed אִשָּׁת וְנוֹנִים, does not mean a harlot, but a woman that has a propensity to become a harlot ("*die veranlagt ist, eine Hure zu werden*"; Sellin). The contention is that the Hebrew idiom, man of bloods, (אִישׁ דָּמִים), woman of contentiousnesses (אִשָּׁת מְרִיבִים), of virtues, of whoredoms, etc., does not describe a person actually engaged in the respective virtue or wickedness, but one merely disposed or inclined toward them; as Sellin puts it: The term refers not to a profession, but to an attribute; "*bezeichnet nicht einen Beruf, sondern eine Eigenschaft.*" We shall show that this interpretation does not do justice to this peculiar Hebrew idiom. Take Ruth 3, 11 and Prov. 12, 4, the virtuous woman. The woman of virtue, אִשָּׁת חַיִּל, is evidently not merely one who is inclined to virtue, but one who shows her virtue by her actions; else, how could Ruth be known as a virtuous woman and the woman of virtue, Prov. 12, 4, be a crown to her husband? Prov. 21, 9 we read: "It is better to dwell in a corner of the house top than with a brawling woman," a woman of contentions, אִשָּׁת מְרִיבִים, "in a wide house." Cp. also Prov. 27, 15. A woman that is merely inclined to quarrelings without showing her inclination, surely would not have drawn out this scathing rebuke. These examples prove that the Hebrew idiom does not merely denote a person having a certain inclination, or tendency, but one who actually follows this inclination and by his action shows his ruling spirit. A woman of whoredoms is therefore not merely a woman inclined to immorality, who spite of this inclination is still chaste, but a woman wholly given to unchastity and immorality in spirit and in deed. Such a woman the prophet is to marry. Again, he is to take, accept, children of whoredoms; as his wife was a harlot, so his children were to be children born in whoredom, not his own,

legitimate offspring. He remained pure and chaste, but the children which Gomer was to bear to him were in fact illegitimate children. Yet he was to accept both the wife of whoredoms as his own, and the children she bore him (cf. v. 3) he was to accept, acknowledge, as his own, since they were born by the woman who was his wife, even though they were the issue of her unchastity.

We see that interpretation No. 3 does not do justice to, but militates against, the clear words of the text.

Sellin goes so far as to assert that Gomer was at her marriage not a harlot and her three children were legitimate offspring of Hosea. Only after the birth of the third child did she play the harlot, and according to Sellin "the verse following 1, 9, which told of her fall, has dropped out, and in its place was put the present verse, which does not at all fit into the context. The verse read about as follows: "And she weaned Lo-ammi and went up to Bethel [?] and committed adultery there (4, 14. 15 f.), and this was told Hosea, and he put her out of his house (9, 15) and said (2, 2): "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband." That certainly is not exegesis, interpretation, but merely reading into the text, rather adding to the text, interpolating, what the text simply does not state or intimate. We hold therefore that God actually commanded Hosea to marry an unchaste woman and to accept those children born by her to him in this state of wedlock as his own children.

It is a strange command which the Lord gave to Hosea at the very beginning of his office, a command involving a fearful sacrifice on the part of the prophet. "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." The covenant relation between God and Israel is frequently compared to that of a husband to his wife (already implied in Ex. 34, 15 f., go a-whoring after their gods, Lev. 17, 7; Num. 15, 39, etc., and directly called so in the Song of Solomon; Is. 50, 1; 54, 1. 5. 6; 62, 4. 5; Jer. 2, 2; 3, 1 ff. 14. 20; Ex. 16, 8 ff.; etc.) or that of a father and his children (Ex. 4, 22; Deut. 32, 5. 6. 19; Is. 63, 16; 64, 7; Jer. 3, 4. 14. 22; Ps. 73, 15; Mal. 1, 6; 2, 10, etc.). The whole nation, regarded as a unit, is the wife, the mother, while the individual members constituting the nation are the children of God, the Husband of Israel and the Father of the Israelites and of Israel, the legal wife of God and mother of the Israelites. This relation was to be one of mutual love and esteem. God had promised His grace and every blessing to His people, Ex. 19, 5. 6; 20, 6; the nation, the wife, had vowed allegiance, loyalty, willing obedience, Ex. 19, 8; 20, 19. On this basis the covenant was established, Ex. 24, 3—11. However, Israel had become a harlot, disloyal to her Husband and Lord, idolatrous, Hos. 1, 1b. By a strange symbolical act Hosea was to show to Israel the



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utter heinousness of its offense. Note the '3; for the land hath committed whoredoms. The shameful whoredom of Israel motivated the strange marriage of Hosea to a harlot. A wife of whoredoms is a wife given over utterly to immorality. Neither was Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, to cease her harlotry after her marriage to the chaste prophet; for the children she bore to the prophet, v. 3, while she was married to him, who were regarded as his children, were in fact children of whoredoms, conceived in adulterous unions with her paramours, born as illegitimate children. Still Hosea was not permitted to divorce her; he was told to keep her and take, accept, regard, and treat her children as though they were his own. What a strange, difficult request! To sacrifice every prospect of a happy marriage, to endure the daily agony of observing the adulteries of his wife, to be obliged to keep this harlot as his spouse, to expose himself to the suspicion as though he were as wicked as she,—how unnatural it seems to us, and oh, how difficult! This woman bore unto *him* a son, presented him with a son, the issue of her adultery, a son of whoredom, and actually expected him to acknowledge that bastard child as his own legitimate offspring. Surely that was the height of brazen impudence, intolerable affrontery. Yet Hosea, in obedience to God's command, went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, v. 3. Truly a remarkable example of absolute obedience and submission to the will of God. "Only to do Thy will my will shall be." And truly a remarkable patience with, and tolerance of, outrageous impertinence and shamelessness.—Yet, was not the demand of Israel upon her Husband even more outrageous? Though she was God's wife, though she had vowed allegiance to Him, though He had showered upon her untold blessings, yet she committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord, v. 2. The mother, Israel as a nation, played the harlot, chap. 2, 5; the individuals were children of whoredoms, of like nature as their mother, like her steeped in idolatry and Baal worship. Still Israel demanded recognition as the spouse, as the children of Jehovah, requesting as their covenant right protection and blessing of Him whose covenant they had broken long ago. What an impudence, worthy of their shameless adultery, to grieve Him with their sins, to cut Him to the quick with their wicked adulteries, to lay Him open to the suspicion as though He countenanced their idolatry, cp. Ps. 50, 21; Rom. 2, 24, and then calmly and with brazen impertinence to demand His help and aid because He was their covenant God, Israel's Husband. Shall God permit this unnatural condition to continue? No! The very names of the children of Gomer are symbolical of the fate which shall soon overtake Israel in penalty of her adulterous idolatry. Each one of the children of Gomer represents Israel in its entirety, only different phases of the judgment being emphasized by each one. Jezreel shall be the

name of the first-born. Why? Since the Lord Himself gives the answer, it is futile to look for other reasons.<sup>2)</sup>

Vv. 4, 5: "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; and it shall come to pass at that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel." The expression "blood of Jezreel" cannot refer to the extermination of the house of Ahab by Jehu, for that was commanded and commended by God, 2 Kings 9, 1—10; 10, 30. This term rather signifies the blood of Naboth shed at Jezreel by Ahab and Jezebel. This bloody atrocity stands out with special prominence in the long annals of crimes recorded against Israel and its royalty. "The blood of Jezreel," this expression at once recalled to every Israelite that cold-blooded shedding of Naboth's blood, in which crime the atrocious wickedness of the bloodthirsty pair occupying Israel's throne culminated. "The blood of Jezreel," these words conjure up to our minds that truly awful curse pronounced upon Ahab and Jezebel because of their bloody murder, 1 Kings 21, 20—24, literally fulfilled at the death of Ahab, 1 Kings 22, 35, 38, and in the extermination of Jezebel and the house of Ahab, in which Jezreel played so conspicuous a part, 2 Kings 9, 10. This divine judgment on the house of Ahab had been executed by Jehu and witnessed by the entire nation. Yet neither executor nor witness had profited by the example of divine justice. Instead of guarding against Ahab's wickedness, from the blood of Jezreel, from murder and bloodshed and similar crimes, such atrocities were quite common, bloods touching bloods in Israel, Hos. 4, 2; 6, 8 ff.; Amos 2, 6 ff.; 4, 1. Therefore, in accordance with the immovable justice of God the sins of the fathers were now to be visited upon the children, the wickedness of the predecessors on the throne on their successors. The ruling house as well as the entire nation was to feel the wrath of God. The house of Jehu shall be deposed (cf. 2 Kings 10, 30—33), and Israel shall no longer be a nation. Israel shall be Jezreel. Note the alliteration, the sharp sibilants cutting the hearer to the very marrow, Israel-Jezreel, reeking with blood, which cries to God for vengeance like the blood of Abel. Their sins equaled those of Ahab; their punishment shall be the same. Both the royal house and the nation shall be exterminated. And as in the judgment upon Ahab for the blood of Naboth the city of Jezreel played so prominent

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2) According to a number of commentators the etymology of the word *Jezreel* determined its choice. They translate, "God scatters." While we concede that in chap. 2, 22, 23 the etymology of Jezreel is undoubtedly referred to, yet etymology does not come into consideration here. 1) Etymology, clearly indicated, 2, 23, is not hinted at here. 2) Jezreel means "God sows," cf. 2, 23; the translation "God scatters," which would be required here, cannot be established.

a part, so the bow of Israel shall be broken, Israel scorned. Its power, in the Valley of Jezreel. While the exact location of the decisive battle is not named in the Bible, it undoubtedly took place in this valley, the scene of so many battles in ancient and modern times. Deborah, Gideon, Saul, Ahab, Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Vespasian, Justinian, Saladin, Napoleon, all fought here, the extensive plain offering an especially suitable battle-ground.

This judgment upon Israel shall not be merely a temporal one, like the seventy years of captivity of Judah. The name of the daughter which later was born to the prophet, *Lo Ruhamah* ("she is not pitied"), symbolized that there would be no more mercy for Israel, no return of the people as such to the land of their fathers. Nor is the material glory only to be taken from Israel; also their spiritual prerogatives shall be lost to them. That also was already implied in *Lo Ruhamah* and is once more and expressly symbolized by the name of the third child of Gomer, *Lo-ammi*, "not My people." That terrible judgment which came upon Judah only in the time of the apostle, 1 Thess. 2, 16, now already came upon the Northern Kingdom. Ye are not My people, and I am not yours! Rejected by God, disowned by Jehovah, repudiated, rejected, forever! Verily, Israel shall be Jezreel!

Shall, then, the name of Israel perish from the earth? Did the unchanging Lord change His counsel? Did He forget, did He deliberately set at naught His promise given to the patriarchs, Gen. 12, 3; 15, 5; 22, 18; 26, 4; 28, 14? No, that promise, like all the promises of God, was still in Him yea and in Him Amen. Though Israel was faithless, unfaithful, the Lord God of the Amen abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself, 2 Tim. 2, 13. Though Israel is Jezreel, though the kingdom has been taken away, God's mercy withdrawn, the nation forever rejected, "yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered," v. 10. Here the Lord combines all the prophecies given to the patriarchs, taking various expressions from the various prophecies and combining them into one promise, in which all shall be fulfilled. There shall be countless children of Israel. How is that possible? "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.'" God lives, and not one of His promises shall perish. Because the living God has promised unto Abraham children as numberless as the sands on the shore of the sea, He, the God of Life, can, Luke 3, 8, and He, the Lord of Truth, will awaken children unto Abraham and Israel. Such as had not been His people, as had been spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath by nature, shall by His almighty grace be made children of the living God who like their Father are possessed of life, spiritual

life, life eternal. Where shall these sons of God, the true children of Israel, be found? In the same place where it was said of them, "Ye are not My people." The innumerable children of Israel shall be composed of such as had once upon a time been called Lo-ammi. That, of course, includes apostate Israel, to whom this very term had been applied, vv. 8. 9. Yet they are not the only ones to whom this term applies. Even before Israel was so called, there were masses of such as were not a people, the countless thousands of heathen of all nations and tongues and peoples, steeped in sin and vice, Eph. 2, 1 ff.; Rom. 1, 18 ff. Israel had become like unto them, had sunk from her high position to the lowest depths of idolatrous pagandom. Out of this *massa perdit*a of heathen with whom Israel according to the flesh had become amalgamated, the Lord will raise children unto Abraham, a true Israel according to the Spirit, Rom. 2, 28. 29; 9, 6—8; Gal. 4, 28. Because of the admission and reception of these heathen into spiritual Israel, into the New Testament Church, God's promise given to Abraham shall indeed be fulfilled. Very clearly God here prophesies the admission of the heathen into the covenant relations with God. So Peter, 1 Pet. 2, 10, and Paul, Rom. 9, 25. 26, interpret this prophecy.

"Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together." Then shall there be no more two kingdoms. That breach which for centuries had severed Judah and Israel shall have been healed. The true children of God out of Judah and Israel according to the flesh shall be gathered together and, with all the children of God among the Gentiles, shall form one people, Eph. 4, 4—6; *una sancta catholica ecclesia*. And there shall be but one Lord. They shall "appoint themselves one head." Though the temporal kingdom was lost, alas! forever, v. 4, yet a kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, would be restored to Israel. Cp. Acts 1, 6. The King of the New Testament Israel is actually an Israelite according to the flesh, of the seed of Abraham, the house of David, Jesus of Nazareth. Under the leadership of this *only* Head "they shall come up out of the land." From wherever they have been called into the sonship of God, they shall come up into that spiritual kingdom of Christ, which knows no boundaries, no limits, which extends to the end of the world. Being in the world, yet not of it, John 17, 11. 14, their conversation is in heaven, Phil. 3, 20. No longer do they run with their former companions to the same excess of riot, 1 Pet. 4, 4, but walk on the highway of holiness, on which the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, Is. 35, 8—10. And then, surely, "great shall be the day of Jezreel." The name of apostate Israel is here used of spiritual Israel in so far as it partook of the penalties inflicted upon Israel as a nation. Spiritual Israel, as part and parcel of the Northern Kingdom, was deeply

affected and grieved by the loss of kingdom and power. It seemed to them indeed as though God had altogether rejected even spiritual Israel. Yet to the true Israel the same blessed fact applies that the Lord through Isaiah revealed about the same time to comfort Judah in her coming hour of sore distress, Is. 49, 14—16; 54, 4—10. Like spiritual Judah, spiritual Israel, though feeling keenly the judgments of God visited upon their respective nations, was not rejected; in due time would come the great day of Jezreel. And in anticipation of that glorious day the Lord turns to His faithful children: "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi ["My people"], and to your sisters, Ruhamah ["beloved, one who has obtained mercy"]." In true brotherliness shall all the members of God's people acknowledge one another as children of the one Father, all having experienced the same compassion. Read Rom. 15, 7—13, which exactly describes the situation here pictured. Note that the three names Jezreel, Lo-ammi, Lo-ruhamah, mentioned as phases of the judgment of God, are here referred to in a manner which shows that every trace of wrath and punishment is gone.

Hengstenberg, like most modern commentators, will not concede that this is a direct prophecy of the conversion of the pagan world. He admits that Paul, Rom. 9, 25, 26, does not merely allude to Hos. 2, 10 ff., but directly quotes this passage as proving the calling of the Gentiles. But then he proceeds: "How can a declaration which according to the entire context can refer only to Israel be directly referred to the Gentiles? The answer is found as soon as we trace the prophecy back to its idea. This is nothing else than that of divine mercy, the execution of which may be hindered by apostasy and disloyalty, but which can never be extinguished, since it is based on the essence of God; cf. Jer. 31, 20. As this idea was realized in the reacceptance of the children of Israel as children of God, so it is realized in the acceptance of the Gentiles. *Because* God has promised to accept the children of Israel again, He must accept also the heathen. We are here speaking not of a mere application, but of a real proof. *Because* God has promised to reaccept the children of Israel, He must accept also the Gentiles. Else that divine counsel would rest on arbitrariness, which is inconceivable in God. Even if the Gentiles are not so near as Israel, still He must, just because He acknowledges the nearer claims, also satisfy the farther ones." That is rationalism pure and simple. God must because—we can see no other way. Must God accept Gentiles because He has promised to accept apostate Israel? Is such a conclusion at all logical? Must I give apples to twenty Negroes because I have promised to give an apple to one white child? Moreover, is Hengstenberg's interpretation doing justice to Paul's use of these words? Is not the selfsame Spirit speaking through Paul that spoke through Hosea? And is not this Spirit the best interpreter of His words? Since the Spirit speaking through

Paul says so, we believe that the Spirit speaking through Hosea here prophesied the calling of the Gentiles. Kimchi says: "This shall take place in the gathering together of the exiles in the day of the Messiah; for unto the second house there went up only Judah and Benjamin, who had been exiles in Babylon; nor were the children of Judah and the children of Israel gathered together; and they shall make for themselves one head—this is the King Messiah." (*The Pulpit Commentary*, p. 9. See also Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief*, ad Rom. 9, 25. 26.) (To be continued.) THEO. LAETSCH.

## Dispositionen über die zweite von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Evangelienreihe.

Neujahr.

Lut. 12, 4—9.

Im neuen Jahr will uns Jesus neu begnaden, Matth. 3, 22. 23; Joh. 54, 10. Im neuen Jahr wollen wir ihm mit neuer Liebe anhängen.

Als Freunde Jesu wollen wir ihn auch im neuen Jahr freudig bekennen.

1. Als Freunde Jesu wollen wir uns nicht vor Menschen, sondern vor Gott fürchten.
2. Als Freunde Jesu wollen wir uns des trösten, daß Gott uns nicht vergißt.
3. Als Freunde Jesu wird er uns auch bekennen vor den Engeln Gottes.

1.

B. 4. Freunde Jesu, welch eine Ehre! Freunde Jesu, des Sohnes Gottes, des Heilandes der Welt. Freunde Jesu; vgl. Joh. 15, 10—15, wo Jesus die Liebe und Vertraulichkeit schildert, mit der er mit seinen Freunden verkehrt. Als solche Freunde sollen und wollen wir Jesum bekennen, seine Person und sein Werk in Wort und Tat rühmen und preisen. (Ausführen.) Menschenfurcht will uns oft die Zunge binden und den Mut zum Tatbekenntnis nehmen. Da heißt es B. 4 bedenken und sich nicht fürchten vor Menschen. Von Gott hingegen gilt B. 5; und das wird er tun, wenn wir Jesum nicht bekennen und also zeigen, daß unsere Freundschaft zu Jesu nur eine erheuchelte ist. Ohne Menschenfurcht, aber in rechter Gottesfurcht wollen wir Jesum bekennen.

2.

Aber es ist doch nichts Geringses, die Gunst der Menschen zu verlieren. Das mag in sich schließen Verlust von Amt, Arbeit und Brot, Verlust des erhofften politischen Postens, vielleicht lebenslängliche Armut und Verachtung. Fürchtet euch nicht! Ihr seid Freunde Jesu, und