

THE
LAMENTATIONS
OF
J E R E M I A H.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE title of this book is rather gathered from the general contents of it, than from any other reason; for there is in fact no title given to it by the Author. The Old Church was accustomed to call it *The Book of Lamentations*: and under the New Dispensation we have adopted the same. There can be no question, but that the Prophet *Jeremiah* was the penman; and on which account indeed, it invariably follows in the order of the books of scripture, his prophecies. And the occasion upon which the Prophet gave vent to the sorrows of his heart, in the desolations of *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, is but too palpable an evidence upon what account they were written.

The Lamentations are for the most part written in the style of the Hebrew poetry, and agreeable to that style of writing, are alphabetically arranged; that is, each verse beginning with the letter as standing in the order of the alphabet. They are very beautiful in point of poetry, but much more so in respect to piety; and no doubt have in many parts strong allusions to Christ; as the Reader, taught by the Holy Ghost, will soon discover. With respect to their date, it must be left to conjecture to determine. It is more than probable, that they were written at different periods, as the calamities of the nation gave scope to the sorrowful exercises of the Prophet. I only detain the Reader, to add a prayer to the Holy Ghost, that his grace may accompany our perusal of them, and make them profitable in a gracious manner, to lead unto Christ: that in tracing the lamentations of God's people, we may always keep in remembrance, that *in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them; in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.*

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

In twenty-two verses, corresponding to the number of the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, the Prophet mourns the desolations of his people, and his beloved city Jerusalem. He confesseth sin, and acknowledgeth the justice of the divine judgments.

HOW doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princes among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

2 She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her*; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

3 Judah is gone into captivity, because of affliction; and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts; all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness.

5 Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper: for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

6 And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts *that* find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

7 Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none

did help her: the adversaries saw her, *and* did mock at her sabbaths.

I pause after reading this last verse, just to remark what a devout vein of real sorrow for sin, as well as a sincere affliction for the miseries which arise out of sin, run through this whole scripture. The Holy Ghost hath caused to be recorded several instances of sacred poetry, of the mournful kind, 2 Sam. i. 19. Ezek. ii. 10. but here is blended with sorrow a sense of sin and unworthiness. I do not presume decidedly to speak upon the subject, but I confess I rather think, that the whole is not only historical, but typical of the Church, in her real captive state under sin and Satan, and the Holy Ghost's preparing the soul by his gracious corrections of sin for the cordial reception of Jesus. John xvi. 8—12.

8 Jerusalem hath grievously sinned: therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

9 Her filthiness *is* in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully; she had no comforter: O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified *himself*.

10 The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen *that* the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command *that* they should not enter into thy congregation.

11 All her people sigh, they seek bread: they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

12 ¶ *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

I again make a pause at the close of this memorable verse, and beg the Reader to judge for himself, whether without violence to the verse, and indeed to the general scope of the whole book of Lamentations, which this verse seems to become a clue to, in explaining, we may not behold a greater than the mournful Prophet Jeremiah here. When we consider that Christ and his Church are one, and that from

everlasting; and that in all the Church's affliction he was afflicted; surely we may look beyond the Prophet Jeremiah's days, and contemplate Christ as thus speaking, when he stood forth the Church's representative and surety in the days of his flesh. See in testimony to this opinion, Isaiah liii. throughout, and the Evangelists on the crucifixion.

13 From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate *and* faint all the day.

14 The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand; they are wreathed, *and* come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the LORD hath delivered me into *their* hands *from whom* I am not able to rise up.

15 The LORD hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the LORD hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a wine-press.

16 For these *things* I weep: mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

17 Zion spreadeth forth her hands, *and* there is none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adversaries *should* be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.

18 ¶ The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

19 I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

20 Behold, O LORD; for I *am* in distress: my

bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me: for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home *there is* as death.

21 They have heard that I sigh: *there is none* to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done *it*: thou wilt bring the day *that* thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

22 Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs *are* many, and my heart *is* faint.

I forbear to enlarge by way of commentary: the Chapter is too plain to need any, and too sublime to receive benefit from any. I only pray the Reader to look over the several passages, and examine, under the Spirit's teaching, whether in a general sense, as referring to the Church at large, or in a more confined point of view, as directed to individuals, as forming part of the whole, the subject may not be supposed to have an eye to the state of the gospel dispensation. And if so, I venture to observe, that without any special or particular application of the several parts of it, the Prophet may be supposed to be treating of the sad cause and effects of sin, and from thence was thus teaching, and preparing the Church for the after coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense, if the whole be read, and with an eye to Jesus, it will be most blessed indeed.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! who can contemplate the dreadful state of the Church at that season, when the Prophet thus mourned, without feeling the most sensible and sorrowful impression? Who that loves Zion, can thus behold Zion, and not take part? And yet, if in the days of Jeremiah there was sad cause for taking up lamentation, surely now there is still greater reason for mourning. It is true indeed, Zion is not gone into *national* captivity: but what of that, spiritual captivity is an infinitely greater evil. So few are there now seeking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, that the language of the Prophet will hold good; *there is none to guide her, among all the sons whom she hath brought forth: neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.* And in a day of such degeneracy in Zion, may we not well suppose, that Jesus is looking on, and feels sensibly for the defections of his people! Lord raise up thy power and come among us. Take to thyself thy great name, and go forth conquering and to conquer, until that thou hast converted the nations to the sceptre of thy grace, and called home thy banished ones to thy glory. Thou wilt arise to have mercy upon Zion, to comfort all that mourn, and to take to thyself a pure people, with one consent to call upon the Lord. Amen.

C H A P. II.

CONTENTS.

We have here a continuation of the same subject as the former. The Prophet mourns over the desolated circumstances of Jerusalem, and complains of those afflictions to God.

HOW hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

2 The LORD hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied; he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought *them* down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

3 He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

4 He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.

5 The LORD was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

6 And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were of* a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

7 The LORD hath cast off his altar, he hath ab-

horred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast.

8 The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

9 Her gates are sunk into the ground: he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles: the law *is* no *more*; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, *and* keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads: they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

11 Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughters of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

12 They say to their mothers, Where *is* corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom.

We shall not fully enter into the spirit of this solemn scripture, nor discover the chief bent of the man of God's lamentations, unless we take with us, all along what it was that so deeply afflicted his mind, and gave the finishing stroke to his sorrow, namely, that it was the Lord's doing. Painful as it was in itself to be brought under the humblings of a proud foe; yet, the aggravated circumstances in it were, that the Lord's hand directed the whole. And when the Lord smites, and for sin also, doubly and tenfold distressing is that misery. Reader! make application of this to the sorrows of Jesus, when receiving at the Lord's hand double for the sins of his beloved Jerusalem, for whom he became surety. The sword of justice that awoke and smote *the man that was God's fellow*, awoke

and smote him at Jehovah's command : yea, *it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief.* Zech. xiii. 7. Isaiah liii. 4, 5, 6.

13 What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea : who can heal thee?

14 Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee : and they have not discovered thine iniquity to turn away thy captivity : but have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment,

15 All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee : they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?*

16 All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee : they hiss and gnash the teeth : they say, We have swallowed *her* up ; certainly this is the day that we looked for : we have found, we have seen *it*.

17 The LORD hath done *that* which he hath devised ; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old : he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied : and he hath caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

18 Their heart cried unto the LORD, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night ; give thyself no rest ; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

19 Arise, cry out in the night : in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD : lift up thy hands towards him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.

20 ¶ Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom

thou hast done this, shall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the LORD?

21 The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, *and* not pitied.

22 Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

There is somewhat very blessed in this address of the Prophet to the Lord, in the close of the Chapter. Pouring out the heart before the Lord, and spreading all our sorrows at the mercy-seat; these are among the sure tokens of grace. It is a certain sign that our afflictions are sanctified, when these effects follow. When our exercises lead our hearts to God, and not lead them *from* God. When Jesus is still loved as Jesus, and his grace and righteousness still sought after, and still above all things valued. Neither doth the soul's humble submission to the Lord's will under sorrowful exercises, become unsuitable or unbecoming, to be accompanied with earnest prayers to be delivered from them. Jesus himself is here our great example: who, when he came purposely to do away sin by suffering, yet in his agonies desired *the cup might pass from him*, Matt. xxvi. 39. But while by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we make our requests known unto God; the work of grace will always induce not only a composed resignation, but more than this, even a perfect approbation, that all is right, though the cup of sorrow be not taken away. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! it will be our wisdom from the perusal of the lamentations of the mournful Prophet, to gather consolation to our exercises, and the exercises of Zion in all ages: and study to learn those sweet and gracious lessons the Holy Ghost intended, from such a record in his sacred scripture.

We see then in this part of the history of the Church, to what a state of sorrow God's people may be brought, when their sins and backslidings testify against them. And will not God in every age, chasten the same in his people? Will he overlook sin in them, more than in the world? Nay, will He not chastise them much more, in proportion as sin in them is more offensive in the divine eye, than in

others. Sin indeed, as sin, is the same thing in all. But, nevertheless, it is worse in God's children than in the ungodly; just as a weed in a garden, though the same as in the hedge or field, is yet more offensive, and more proper to be rooted out. Let us learn therefore from hence, how sure sin, in all its various forms, must induce the divine displeasure, and bring on the chastisement of God.

In the next place, let us under all our exercises of affliction trace our sorrows to the source, and when we find the *Achan* in the camp, bring all with deep contrition before the Lord: and say in the Lord's own words, *take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips!*

And above all, Reader! see to it, that in all our sorrow for sin, and desires after pardon from the guilt of it, the whole is done with an eye to Christ. It is He which hath borne our sins and carried our sorrows; and it is wholly in respect to him and his finished salvation, that God pardons the sin and accepts the sinner. Even the corrections of the Lord are not for the satisfaction of God's justice, for that justice hath been fully satisfied by the blood of the cross; and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, by whose stripes we are healed. But all corrections for sin become the testimony of God's holiness; and are in the charter of grace so set forth, and not by way of expiation. Therefore with an eye to Jesus, and the everlasting efficacy of his sin-cleansing blood, let our sorrow for sin, and repentance towards God be always accompanied. And oh! how sweet and precious the thought, that the same merit is in the blood of the Lamb as ever, though new contracted defilement be in his people, from day to day. Precious Jesus! thou hast made my peace by the blood of thy cross.

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

The same subject of lamentation runs through the whole of this Chapter.

I *AM* the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

2 He hath led me and brought *me* into darkness, but not *into* light.

3 Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.

4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old: he hath broken my bones.

5 He hath builded against me, and compassed *me* with gall and travel.

6 He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old.

7 He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy.

8 Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

9 He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

10 He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places.

11 He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.

12 He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

13 He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

14 I was a derision to all my people; *and* their song all the day.

15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.

If we do by this scripture as the Apostle enjoined upon another occasion, *compare spiritual things with spiritual*, we may discern some striking features of One greater than the Prophet thus expressing himself. 1 Cor. ii. 13. I am free to allow, that the mournful Prophet might truly say, in reference to his own personal calamities, that he *was a man of affliction*; but still I think the personal afflictions of Jeremiah would not have been considered sufficiently remarkable, to have demanded a book of elegies in the volume of scripture. And when I behold expressions in this sacred book of God, similar to what is found elsewhere in the Bible, and directly spoken of Christ; and in a spirit of prophecy *by* Christ; I must at least be obliged to connect so much together of both, as to have my mind led out in contemplation upon the person of my Lord. Let the Reader meditate upon many things said in these verses, and then recollect what is said elsewhere of Christ, and by Christ; and I venture to think, that the application will be striking. Jeremiah was a mournful Prophet indeed: but Jesus, as the Head and Representative of his people, was the only One that could in a way of personal and peculiar appropriation say, *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath*. See Psm. xxii. Heb. v. 7, 8. Psm. lxix. &c. Some have thought, that it is the Church which is here venting her sorrows

by the pen of the Prophet. And if it be so, is not Jesus the Head of his Church, eminently the first mourner: and the Church in all her members beheld in him? Reader! remember, I do nothing more than merely propose the humble question. I assert nothing. But I conceive, that it will always be found profitable, in all the parts of lamentation and suffering, to eye Him *who was made perfect through suffering*; and I humbly believe, that we shall not lose an atom of profitableness, if then our views of the Church or of individual believers be beheld as in Him.

18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

20 My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

22 *It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 *They are new every morning*: great is thy faithfulness.

I make an interruption to the reading of the Chapter here, only to remark the beauty and gracefulness of the Prophet's observation: that though in the midst of suffering, there is no injustice. It is *of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*. It is blessed when God condemns us, that we still can and do approve of Him. *The just Lord can do no iniquity*. Zeph. iii. 5. Ezra, Nehemiah, Job; all the faithful have acknowledged this. Ezra ix. 13. Nehemiah ix. 33. Job ix. 12—21.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul: therefore will I hope in him.

25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.

26 *It is good that a man* should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

27 *It is good for a man* that he bear the yoke in his youth.

28 He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne *it* upon him.

29 He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.

30 He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him ; he is filled with reproach.

31 For the LORD will not cast off for ever.

32 But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

33 For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

34 To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,

35 To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,

36 To subvert a man in his cause, the LORD approveth not.

37 Who *is* he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass, *when* the LORD commandeth *it* not?

38 Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good ?

39 Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?

40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

41 Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

42 We have transgressed, and have rebelled : thou hast not pardoned.

43 Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us : thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.

44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that *our* prayer should not pass through.

45 Thou hast made us *as* the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

47 Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

48 Mine eye runneth down with rivers of

water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

49 Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not without any intermission;

50 Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven.

51 Mine eye affecteth mine heart, because of all the daughters of my city.

52 Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.

53 They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.

54 Waters flowed over mine head; *then* I said, I am cut off.

55 I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.

56 Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.

57 Thou drewest near in the day *that* I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.

58 O LORD, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul: thou hast redeemed my life.

59 O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause.

60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance, *and* all their imaginations against me.

61 Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, *and* all their imaginations against me;

62 The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.

63 Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; *I am* their musick.

64 Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.

65 Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.

66 Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.

Very beautiful and highly instructive is the whole of this passage, and every verse more or less is a sermon; but it would swell the commentary to a length indeed, to notice the several beauties of it. I rather offer a prayer upon it, that God the Holy Ghost will bless this whole Chapter, and the whole Book of the Lamentations to the Reader's mind, in his solemn and devout perusal. And blessed will indeed be that study, if Christ be discovered as the sum and substance of the whole Bible, *to whom all the Prophets give witness, and that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* Acts x. 43.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! your afflictions and mine, like the Prophet's, or the Church, can only find motives to assuage and soften them in the contemplation of the unequalled sorrows of Jesus. While we have our eyes stedfastly directed unto Him, we shall find our sorrows lightened, and our faces will not be ashamed. For while we eye Him, we hear a voice speaking to our hearts in a way of the most gracious accommodation; *behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?*

Reader! let me only detain you with a short observation, just to remark, how blessed the after fruits of exercises are, where our sorrows are sanctified with grace, and Jesus mingles our tears with the spiced wine of his pomegranate. And if afflictions lead to Him, prompt the soul to lean upon Him: determine the heart to abide by Him, and like an ancient sufferer, compel the soul to say, *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*; depend upon it, these afflictions which are thus sanctified, be they what they may, are among the *all things* which work together for good, and will be found in the end to be *the light afflictions of the moment, which work out of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

The fallen and sorrowful state of Zion is made the subject of lamentation through the greater part of this Chapter. Towards the close the punishment of Edom is threatened.

HOW is the gold become dim! *how* is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

3 Even the sea monsters draw out the breast,

they give suck to their young ones : the daughter of my people *is become* cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

4 The tongue of the suckling child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst : the young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them.

5 They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets : they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

6 For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

7 Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire :

8 Their visage is blacker than a coal : they are not known in the streets : their skin cleaveth to their bones ; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

9 *They that be* slain with the sword are better than *they that be* slain with hunger : for these pine away, stricken through, for *want of* the fruits of the field.

10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children : they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Never was the desolation of a kingdom mourned over with more awakened and heart-felt sorrow, than what is here done of Zion. The Prophet seems to have his whole soul going out in the most dejected state of lamentation. He takes notice of all the objects of distress, which might be supposed to call up mourning. He contrasts her former state of joy with the present dejection ; and then, having raised up all the finer feelings in the view, describes the deplorable situation of misery in all its aggravated circumstances. The images are very strong. They that were fed delicately, were desolate in the streets : they that were brought up in scarlet, embraced dunghills. Yea, even the tender mother was found to have sodden her own children to abate the cravings of hunger ! But amidst these strong descriptions of misery, I beg the Reader to take yet more especial

notice of one, in the case of the *Nazarites*, which, from the connection with Him who was the One great *Nazarite*, and to whom the whole order acted but as types, demands our attention the more. Every thing that is said here of the purity of the *Nazarite*, could only be said so in relation to Jesus. He, and He only, was pure, and holy, and harmless, and undefiled. The Church bore testimony to this, when she said, *my beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand*, Song v. 10. Hence Matthew was commissioned to tell the Church, that the great reason intended from Christ's dwelling in Nazareth was, that he might be called a *Nazarene*, that is, the great *Nazarite*. Matt. ii. 23. Thus the passage read with an eye to Christ, will be, her *Nazarites* in Him were purer than snow, but in themselves their visage was blacker than a coal. Recollect what Isaiah saith of Jesus, when bearing the sins of his redeemed: *his visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men*, Isaiah lii. 14.

11 The LORD hath accomplished his fury: he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

12 The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

The accomplishment of God's purposes, and the astonishment of the heathen, in God's chastisements of his people are very striking observations in this Chapter.

13 ¶ For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,

14 They have wandered *as blind men* in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

15 They cried unto them, Depart ye: *it is unclean*; depart, depart, touch not; when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn *there*.

16 The anger of the LORD hath divided them: he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.

17 As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain

help: in our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not save *us*.

18 They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

19 Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

Here the Prophet traceth the cause to its source, and by proving the corruption and sin of Israel to be universal, most fully justifies the judgment of the Lord, in making the punishment universal. Reader! is not this altogether gospel, and intended for the introduction of that grace in Jesus, which universal sin and corruption must make so highly necessary? Rom. iii. 9—26.

21 ¶ Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz: the cup also shall pass through unto thee; thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

22 The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will discover thy sins.

Edom is put here as the representative of all the enemies of the Church. It was an old grudge, which begun in *Esau's* heart against *Jacob*: yea, it began long before in the person of *Cain* against *Abel*: and the enmity still runs, and ever will run, while the world continues, through the whole race. Galat. iv. 29. But the hour of reckoning must come: and an awful one it will be, when all the enemies of God and his Christ will be made to drink *of the cup of trembling*, and be driven from the presence of God *with everlasting destruction*. And perhaps, the heaviest of all their condemnation and punishment, will arise from the hatred and opposition they have been found to make in this life to the people of God. Taking away the children's bread, or endeavouring to make that bread unpleasant to them; tempting them to call in question God's love, and the like; it should seem from the general standard of scripture, that this will be more to their everlasting peril and sorrow, than all the other sins which

they have committed in this life, against the light of nature and of revelation. In confirmation of this, I refer to the prophecy of Obadiah.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us, in beholding the sad consequences of sin, in the case of the Church of old; seriously consider, to what the same cause might justly reduce the Church in any, and in every age now; if the Lord were to enter into strict judgment with his people. Was there ever a period more alarmingly distressing on this account than now? And as the Lord hath not promised exemption from the rod in case of sin: though in Christ he hath assured the Church of an exemption from everlasting ruin on that account, have we not just reason for fear? And should the Lord arise to visit our national offences with a rod, who but would tremble?

Precious Jesus! though we are gone away as a people, yea, far away in rebellions: though for profaneness and impiety, sabbath-breaking and transgression, the land mourneth: yet, Lord, turn to us, and turn our hearts to thee, that we may fear thy name. Oh! come to us, and bless us with awakening, converting, renewing, confirming grace. Be as the dew unto Israel, that we may *revive as the corn, and grow as the vine*: and that our scent in thee and from thee, may be *as the wine of Lebanon*. For then, and then only, when thou comest to bless, shall we go forth to meet thee, and have our souls renewed *in the light of thy countenance*.

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter the Prophet puts a close to his lamentations in prayer; and a most sweet and gracious prayer it is!

REMEMBER, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider and behold our reproach.

2 Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.

3 We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers *are* as widows.

4 We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us.

5 Our necks *are* under persecution: we labour *and* have no rest.

I cannot sufficiently admire the strain of reasoning and of pleading with the Lord, which the Prophet here useth in prayer. Reminding the Lord of their relationship, by virtue of God's covenant with their fathers, and at the same time, spreading before the Lord the ill treat-

ment they received from the heathen; these became blessed pleas in prayer. Reader! there are no arguments now (for it is the same in all ages) that we can bring before the throne, but what hath first come to us from the throne. God's covenant love in Christ, and the everlasting and unceasing efficacy of Christ's blood and righteousness; these are they which must be our sole dependance, when the enemy from without, or sin within, bring the soul into trouble!

6 We have given the hand *to* the Egyptians, *and to* the Assyrians to be satisfied with bread.

7 Our fathers have sinned, *and are* not, and we have borne their iniquities.

8 Servants have ruled over us: *there is* none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand.

9 We gat our bread with *the peril* of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness.

10 Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine.

11 They ravished the women in Zion, *and* the maids in the cities of Judah.

12 Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured.

13 They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood.

14 The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their musick.

15 The joy of our heart is ceased: our dance is turned into mourning.

16 The crown is fallen *from* our head: woe unto us that we have sinned!

17 For this our heart is faint: for these *things* our eyes are dim.

18 Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.

The Prophet harps upon this string of the enemies' oppression, knowing, that God's jealousy for his people would be justly excited thereby. The Prophet knew, that Jehovah had himself declared, in instances that were past, that he would have scattered his people into corners, had it not been that the enemy would have triumphed. And as this restrained the Lord's hand then, he pleaded this with an hope, that the same cause would work now. See Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. Reader! mark this scripture; and take it with thee to the throne in

times of oppression. Jesus's cause is his people's cause; and our foes are his foes.

19 Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.

20 Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?

21 Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned: renew our days as of old.

22 But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

How blessedly the Prophet here takes hold of the eternity, and unchangeable nature and purposes of God's faithfulness and mercy in Christ. And how earnestly on these grounds doth he plead for grace, being given to the Church, that the Church thereby may be turned unto God. And like another powerful pleader among the Prophets, how passionately doth he plead for God's sore wrath to be taken away. Isaiah lxiii. 15—19. May the Lord write upon the heart of both Writer and Reader, a deep sense of these several pleas: and yet more especially lead them to see, that the whole is only founded in Christ Jesus!

REFLECTIONS.

I CANNOT prevail upon myself to close this Book of Lamentations, without once again blessing the Lord for having endured the mind of his servant the Prophet with such large portions of grace, so to take part in the afflictions of his people. And I take occasion therefrom, to beg the Reader to join my spirit in prayer also, that He would of his infinite grace and mercy, give to his praying people now, large portions of the same precious frame of mind, that all selfish considerations may be lost in the view of the present languishing state of Zion. Surely there never was a period when her interests were less regarded. Where are the praying seed of Jacob to be found? Who is there that lays it at heart, how very low she now is? Moreover, are not, as in Jeremiah's days, the Lord's judgments in the earth? And may we not, without danger of committing an error, trace up the cause to the Lord's jealousy for his Zion? Did Jesus purchase the Church with his blood; and can he be indifferent to her best interests? My soul! lay these things to heart. Reader! I charge it upon you, do the same! Whatever the event of the present commotions of the earth may be, let a throne of grace be enabled to witness for both, that Zion is there remembered by us in our warmest prayers, and her welfare preferred above our chief joy. Oh! that every nerve was exerted, and every heart-affection on the stretch, under the Holy Ghost's influence, and that we entered into the retirings of our God in Christ, to plead with him for Zion. *Spare Lord, I would say, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.* Reader! the Lord prepare both for his holy will and pleasure, that we may sing our song upon *Alamoth*, what was composed for the Lord's hidden ones, *when He wiseth to shake terribly the earth.* Amen.