

THE MARRIAGE OF HOSEA

LEROY WATERMAN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The first three chapters of the Book of Hosea have furnished one of the very interesting and one of the most perplexing problems in the interpretation of Israelitish prophecy, from the earliest commentators to the present day. Other obscurities and ambiguities of prophecy still plentifully exist, but it is probably safe to say that in no other instance does the central message of a prophet turn so universally upon the interpretation of a single pivotal figure as is true in the narrative of Hosea's marriage. But what makes this problem, still, one of abiding importance is the fact that upon the interpretation of this domestic experience depends the possibility of the highest religious and ethical contribution to the prophetic religion of Israel.

There have been two schools of interpreters of this passage, both marked by various internal differences, but the one has regarded the account as entirely devoid of fact while the other has explained it as based upon actual facts of experience.

The first hypothesis, whether regarding the narrative as a vision or as pure allegory, has never been consistently worked out and was posited primarily to avoid the natural and manifest force of the language, which is a sufficient comment upon it. The second theory presents much wider variations but has also two main phases. The first of these may be called the reminiscent interpretation, since it regards the narrative as a religious explanation of the prophet's experience as he looks back upon it, in the light of other experiences. This may still be regarded as the prevailing view. The second may be called the realistic interpretation, since it leaves no room for a later impression of the prophet's experiences. This view has not lacked advocates in modern times and more recently its supporters have notably increased. This is the more noteworthy since the tendencies in this direction have not been due to theological bias or sectarian interest but solely to the desire for scientific accuracy.

The reminiscent theory has likewise undoubtedly been developed, very largely, as an attempt to avoid the natural force of the language, and accordingly it is open to several criticisms: (1) it is objectionable as a method not to consider the entire narrative, first of all at its face value; (2) it imports into the narrative the interpreter's sense of appropriateness as the ultimate basis of the theory; (3) in reconstructing the course of events of chapters 1-3 it has been thought necessary to assume so much that is vital to the interpretation, which is not stated, that it has tended to overload the theory; (4) it has been obliged to let the whole interpretation turn upon the meaning of a single verse (3:2) which, on all hands, is recognized as obscure and suspicious. In view of these defects, an interpretation which should endeavor to take the language at its face value was to be expected and it is rather remarkable that it was not earlier and more widely undertaken.

What can be done with these three chapters from this viewpoint? Can they be taken literally and be wrought into a unity (barring of course those verses that are generally recognized to be secondary)? So far as the first-class attempts made in recent times are concerned, this does not seem to be possible with chapter 3. P. Volz (*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, XLIV, 321-335, fully indorsed by Marti, cf. *Handkommentar* on Hosea) is obliged to make it an allegory and accordingly places it later. Toy (*JBL.*, XXXII, 75-79) denies any organic relation between chapters 1 and 3, disposing of וַיֵּשׁב "again" (3:1) as editorial. J. M. P. Smith ("The Prophet and His Problem," p. 109-136) is the first to treat the narrative constructively throughout, and he has rendered an important service by fully reconstructing the narrative from the realistic viewpoint. Dr. Smith assigns ch. 3 to Hosea, but (following Steuernagel's *Einleitung in das A. T.*) makes it the prophet's own description of what is narrated in ch. 1 in the third person. This cannot be done, however, if we take ch. 1 at its face value. Chapter 1 states that Gomer was taken into wedlock at Yahweh's command and it gives no implication and makes no room for a period of detention of Gomer for "many days" before she was received into full marital relations. Chapter 3 states that the prophet at the command of Yahweh obtains possession of an impure woman and then

keeps her in isolation. No marriage relation is consummated and none is implied. The incongruity of ch. 3 as a direct statement of ch. 1 requires an assumption similar to the reminiscent theory, but with the difference that the latter provides room for it, while in the former the room for it is less obvious. But this rearrangement of ch. 3 goes deeper than merely changing its setting, it makes it impossible to take any statement of the chapter, involving the prophet, at its face value without more ado. The construing of עֹר "again" with וַיֵּאמֶר (3:1) requires an assumption that Yahweh had commanded something in connection with the narrative which has now been lost. There is, however, no trace of this in the account and scarcely any room for it as the narrative stands (cf. 1:2). Yahweh's command to "love a woman" (3:1) cannot be allowed since love cannot be produced to order, and for the prophet to have actually complied with it would, when the analogy is applied to Yahweh, signify his approval of Israel's corrupt worship. "A woman" (3:1), although indefinite, cannot be allowed to be other than Gomer since this would make the prophet have too much traffic with impure women (as based on the interpreter's feeling of appropriateness). "A woman, an adulteress" (3:1) cannot be taken as the former wife, since Hosea knew the woman's evil character from the beginning and never had any affection for her. If she practiced adultery after marriage as before, there was in this no disillusionment, and there could be accordingly no thought of her regeneration, since there was no basis of affection between them. Hence there could be no purpose served by isolating her; and such a course, in that case, could only mean an essential abandonment of the figure with which the prophet set out. "Even as Yahweh loveth the children of Israel" (v. 1) can now only mean "as Yahweh does not love Israel," since the human analogy of Yahweh's affection, with which it is directly equated has been interpreted negatively. The act of isolating the woman (v. 3) cannot be taken as a thing complete in itself, but only as the purchase of a bride, although the verb כָּרָה is never used elsewhere for this purpose. It is questionable, therefore, whether the attempt to treat the narrative realistically can do so with any less assumption than is involved in the reminiscent theory and whether there is as good ground for making it.

There remains to be considered the psychological appropriateness of the realistic interpretation, for Hosea as an ethical teacher, and the motive and message which it permits us to assign the prophet. The motive may be stated thus: Hosea, one of the great ethical teachers of Israel, feels himself called of God to commit himself to a life of moral pollution in order to teach his fellow Israelites that they were practicing the same kind of religious and moral pollution in their relations to Yahweh. If true, the case is probably unique of a moral teacher making himself an example in kind of the evil which he wished to eradicate. Israel is charged with marital infidelity to Yahweh and the prophet voluntarily enters into such a personal relation, expecting thereby to impress his hearers with the heinousness of this relation. This at once raises the question of the moral clearness of the prophet, but so far as the rest of Hosea's book is concerned there can be no doubt about that, and this speaks very strongly for the same clearness throughout his work, for this is not a question of local psychology but of a universal ethical principle. Human nature is uniform enough, at least in one respect, so that whoever openly practices what he preached against can always expect to be met with a fatal *et tu quoque*.

If it be urged that the prophets felt themselves absolutely under Yahweh's will and so could be expected to do any sensational thing, it need not be denied that they did very unusual things. The only question involved is, What was for them the supreme norm? Was it the absoluteness of Yahweh's control over them or to be sensationalists or to teach ethical truth? The uniform witness of the great prophets gives but a single answer, they were primarily ethical teachers of religion. This norm determined both what the will of Yahweh was as well as their allegiance to it. The prophets did unusual things but never elsewhere did they commit an act involving moral turpitude. The most extreme case, perhaps, of Isaiah going naked and bare-foot for three years (Is. 20:3), even if taken literally, does not come under this category. Clothing is not so indispensable in Palestine as with us and the practice of stripping the captives taken in war, cf. Is. 32:11; 47:3, from whom the slave market was regularly replenished, made the appearance of human beings without clothing, in considerable numbers, a somewhat familiar

spectacle. The example of Isaiah, with only a word, spoke with great force of captivity, not of obscenity. The psychological presuppositions with which the realistic interpretation is forced to conclude seems even more of a boomerang than the psychological appropriateness with which the reminiscent theory sets out.

What then constitutes the message of chapters 1-3, realistically considered? (1) Not that Yahweh loves Israel, love is nowhere in the analogy; (2) it is not that the prophet by his relation to Gomer arrived at any new truth; (3) it was primarily an expression of the incompatibility between Israel and Yahweh, but to what end? If the analogy be taken at its face value, not simply in time, but in its fundamental nature, there existed no true relation between Israel and Yahweh and no basis for expecting such ever to exist, and therefore, logically, the appeal would be to turn the people from Yahweh. But the nation could have answered with righteous indignation that this marriage did not represent the fundamental relation between Yahweh and Israel, yet had they granted that it was true their rejoinder would have been quick and sharp. Why take the trouble so laboriously to illustrate that which has no foundation in reality! If a wife who later becomes faithless truly represents Israel's relation to Yahweh, the prophet's conscious choice of an immoral consort does not truly illustrate the same thing, and in the latter case Hosea could not even excuse his conduct by saying that the land committed whoredom from Yahweh, let alone teach the nation a lesson. That is to say, the analogy taken realistically illustrates too much and logically would seem to eliminate the motive for the prophecy.

On the whole the reminiscent theory seems to the present writer to involve less of assumption and self-contradiction, less violence to the text and less psychological strain, while at the same time it preserves higher values and a clearer motive for the prophet. Some of the objections brought against it are more apparent than real. The charge that it is a contradiction to make the call of the prophet go back to the commandment to take a wife if he only found out her true character years afterward, while as a matter of fact he is seen to be a prophet at the birth of his son Jezreel, although there is no hint in the name

that he is as yet aware of his wife's infidelity, is not a serious objection. The anomaly is explained if we make the prophet's call take place at the time of his marriage, then the later discovery of his wife's unfaithfulness causes him to reinterpret his call in exactly the same manner that Isaiah's call is usually accounted for.

The claim that the purpose of the marriage was not to reveal Yahweh's love to Israel since that was already appreciated has been well discussed in *ICC*. (p. cxliv). It is true that tribal religion always implies a sense of love of the god for his people, and this had become explicit in Israel before Hosea and is recorded in JE; and nothing could annul this so long as the nation retained its god and could maintain its place in the sun. But that a god should cut off his people because of moral unfaithfulness, although he loved them, was a hitherto unheard of principle. Moreover, that his love should still continue, although they were cut off from him and with no prospect of their repentance, here was a new thing under the sun. Here was ethical love, a love that involved no reciprocity, a love purged of all physical passion, a love that will hold its object to strictest accountability, that overlooks no imperfection in its object and yet that will not die. And it is here urged that this is all legitimately involved in chapter 3 in its present setting; but to say that an accident of juxtaposition makes the Old Testament outreach itself in ethical depth and grandeur of conception raises more questions than it solves.

The reminiscent principle of interpreting past experience as a part of God's direct leading and Providence is in itself thoroughly psychological and needs no defence, and it is entirely possible to conceive of past events as directed by God because of some particular outcome, which one could not conceive as commanded by God when no such outcome was to be foreseen.

These considerations, however, do not bridge the gulf between chapters 1 and 3 on the ordinary view that Gomer was divorced and sent away, nor do they render the usual view either imperative or decisive. But the divorce idea hinges almost entirely on ch. 3:2, which is manifestly obscure and probably corrupt (yet this is not the only inference to be drawn from this verse even in its present form). What chapter 3 does clearly say, however, is that the prophet, feeling himself still drawn toward

his renegade wife, cuts her off from her illicit intercourse and places her in isolation (אהבת v. 1 is most suitably pointed as an active pte. "loving," following the LXX and the context of the analogy; as Volz suggests, the Masorettes may have made it passive to shield the character of the nation), and there the account leaves her. No divorce proceedings are recorded and none are required to account for the phenomena.

But we may go farther, and say that there is no need even to suppose that Gomer ever ceased to be an honorable member of society, from the standpoint of the community. If she were a loyal worshipper of Yahweh-Baal as the populace practiced it, according to Hosea's description, it was inevitable that she should be described as a harlot, cf. 2:2-13; 4:10-14; 5:3, 4, 7; 6:9, 10; 7:4 ff.; 8:9; 9:10, 15. The basic figure in these passages is not disloyalty to Yahweh due to the formal worship of other gods, the prophet is a witness that the people were not consciously seeking any god but Yahweh at the great shrines (cf. 5:6; 8:2). To him it was not the worship of Yahweh because of its character, and what made that character decisive was not primarily its formalism or its reliance upon ritual, but because of the adulterous practices of the worship. It involved actual adultery in the first place: the above references leave no doubt on that point, "your daughters play the harlot and your brides commit adultery . . . for the men themselves go apart with harlots and they sacrifice with sacred prostitutes" (4:13 f.). This is simply sexual promiscuity practiced at the great shrines of Yahweh-worship in Israel. "Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God, for the spirit of whoredom is in the midst of them, and they know not Yahweh" (5:4), and that is primarily why their religion is not Yahweh worship.

The Baalism over which Yahwism in Hosea's day threw a very thin cloak, with its worship of the forces of productivity, has always carried the seeds of sexual immorality (cf. Wood, *JBL.*, XXXV, p. 53), and at times its fruits have been more noticeable than at others. Phoenician Baalism spread its moral pollution around the entire Mediterranean. Babylonia had its female votaries to this worship and Canaan its sacred prostitutes, both men and women (4:15). The prosperity and luxury of the reign of Jeroboam II naturally stimulated the sensuous side of Baalism and lust did the rest.

We may formulate the domestic life of the prophet about as follows. Hosea was married and became a prophet. His wife was as religious as himself although in a different way. She accepted the orthodox religious practices of the time as the last word in religion and she practiced them with complete devotion. The authority for this statement is mainly chapter 2. Separated from later accretions, the chapter now begins with a man and his wife and ends with Yahweh and Israel. The transition is made easily and naturally by a process familiar in the prophets whereby the word of the prophet merges into the direct word of God and the wife addressed then takes on the figure of the nation. Because of this ending the chapter may be said formally to apply to the nation, but the basic figures are human and domestic, and there are at least two which could not be evolved naturally from the nation as Yahweh's spouse, (1) "yea upon her children will I have no mercy, for they are children of whoredom" (v. 4-5). To be strictly applicable Israel should have had colonies. Israel as a matter of fact had no children and it is only by straining a point that they can be explained as individual Israelites. (2) "When she decked herself with her nose-ring and her jewels and forgat me," etc. (v. 13). What was the nose-ring of Israel?

The two figures of wife and nation are closely interwoven in the chapter and almost interchangeable but with sufficient distinction to show that both are used; and underneath the whole lurks the suppressed fire of indignation of a man wounded in all his finer feelings and deeper sensibilities. This chapter sets forth, from the standpoint of the prophet, the practices of worship in the current religion, in which his wife shared. To him it is not religion but adulterous practices and these are all applied as violations of the marriage bond. It was not that Hosea suddenly and once for all discovered that his wife was faithless, what he discovered was that she was religious and that she persisted in being religious in the conventional way of the time. There was undoubtedly a definite time, perhaps very early in their married life, when he realized her unchastity in religion (cf. 4:13-14 "brides"), but she did not share his view of it but continued her religious "devotions," especially at the feast days (cf. 2:11), ever increasing the tension between them, until he reached a point where he said "you are not my wife and I am not your

husband," you are a harlot (2:1). It is possible that something of this struggle is reflected in the names of their two daughters. But he did not thereupon put her away, for there was no charge of adultery that could be brought against her, and she may even have been regarded as a sort of local saint. The most that he could do was to threaten her with harshness, isolation, and the deprivation of the means of offerings (2:3, 9, 13). But she was religious and would not be frightened out of it, quite possibly she assumed a martyr's attitude, and there is nothing to show that she did not regard herself as a dutiful wife.

It was in the midst of this tragic struggle of religion against higher religion that Hosea came to the conclusion that the popular worship was not Yahweh-religion at all, for if his wife's religious practices were unchaste, this was not pleasing to Yahweh, it was not his worship. Now as Yahweh was popularly equated with Baal, we should have expected him to conclude that the popular religion was Baal worship, but he always says Baalim; this offers some difficulty if he arrived at the conception purely by speculation, but it is exactly the form to be based on the figure of his wife's sexual promiscuity at the sanctuary.

Hosea gradually reaches a point where the cry of 2:1 becomes a fixed conviction, he must inwardly, at least, cut himself off from such pollution, to him henceforth she can be only "a woman" (3:1), but not a woman who meant to be bad or was conscious of being bad (cf. 8:2) or was conscious of being anything but a good wife and a loyal servant of Yahweh; that was the heart-breaking thing both in Hosea's domestic life and his public experience with the nation. But a strange thing was about to happen to the prophet, having inwardly cut himself off from his wife, he will now be free from this domestic tragedy, at least in his spirit. What relief of soul to make a clean breast of the thing! What a glow of inward victory! and then for the first time in years he was able to look upon Gomer without a feeling of opposition and her bravery and devotion stand out before him, for she was a brave woman, a devoted woman, yes and a true-hearted woman too; although caught in the wheel of a national religious tragedy. And then and there he decided to save her from this delusion of moral pollution, even against her will, for something which he had supposed was dead yet lived and held

him—he loved her still and it is not strange under the circumstances, that he never ceased to feel that there was something divine about it. Hosea outwardly accomplished his purpose toward his wife by forbidding her to visit the sanctuaries, but there is nothing to show that she was ever changed in her inner conviction; we should scarcely expect it from the preceding narrative.

It may be urged against this reconstruction of the narrative that it leaves no room for 3:2 which is usually translated “so I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley and a half homer of barley.” In the first place this verse is doubtful. It is doubtful whether the verb should be translated “bought,” it is more than doubtful about the price paid, why, for example, money and grain and why two different amounts of barley, one of them an otherwise unknown measure? But supposing that the verse were sound, it is only necessary to suppose that Gomer had taken upon herself a vow, which took her to the sanctuary and in a measure put her in the control of the local priesthood (cf. Nu. 30:6). The price was then the gift which Hosea was obliged to make in order to obtain her release. That he should express it in the form of buying back a slave would vividly express his estimate of her religious devotion. It would even be possible that she had decided to become permanently a devotee (cf. קרשה 4:14), partly as a result of her struggle with her husband.

But it is not with any confidence that anything can be built upon this verse in its present form. The verb ואכרה “and I bought” is doubly uncertain. Is there a verb כרה “to buy”? There are three other cases where the lexicons assume it, viz., Dt. 2:6; Job 6:27; 40:30. The passages in Job are both used with על “upon” and the contexts imply selling rather than buying. The word seems to correspond to Arabic *karā* “to let for hire.” The verb in Dt. 2:6 is given the sense “buy” from the parallel verb שבר “to buy food,” while כרה is used of purchasing water. שבר is regularly used for buying food (cf. Gen. 41-44), also for purchasing food and drink (Is. 55:1). There can be no doubt but that the form in Dt. 2:6 means to secure water for money, but the unusual word, where שבר would amply have covered the operation, seems to emphasize something more than

buying. 2 Kings 3:16 and context suggest the manner of securing water in the region of Edom for a large company, namely by digging shallow trenches, and modern exploration reveals the fact that what is described in 2 Kings 3 as a miracle, is still a reliable means for securing water in that region (cf. New Cent. Bible, *ad loc.*). The usual meaning of כרה "to dig," therefore, furnishes a suitable explanation of the manner of getting the water and if this be granted, the verb in Hos. 3:2 in the sense "to buy" stands alone. In the second place the form in itself is anomalous. The dagesh in the כ is usually explained as dagesh *dirimens* (Ges. 20 h), but if so it is again an isolated case and the lexicons are doubtful or assume it false (cf. BDB. and Ges-Buhl, *ad loc.*). There is some reason in this, so far as dagesh *dirimens* is concerned, but the word is a perfectly good form of an ע"ע verb כרר and the corresponding Arabic form *karra* "to cause to turn back" suits this context admirably. The Versions negatively confirm this since they consistently translate "hired" or "dug" (LXX-Syr. *μισθωσάμην, ἔσκαψα* Vulg. *fodi*, Syro-Hex.) even though this makes no sense; only once does Lat. *emi* "bought" occur. The second difficulty with our verse is the omission of כ *pretii*, after the first item; this omission would be natural if כ merely indicated accompaniment, i. e. if he caused her to turn back to him with these articles in her possession. 1 S. 1:24 illustrates both the grammar and the situation. As Hannah went up to Shiloh unaccompanied by her husband but with various offerings (three bullocks, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine), so may the wife of Hosea have done, indeed she must have done so if she went at all, for with the witness of Hosea's scathing denunciations of public worship at the sanctuaries (4:12-13, 15; 5:6; 6:6; 7:14; 8:14; 9:15) we cannot possibly think of him as resorting thither. When, therefore, he says: "I caused her to turn back to me" (לי), the expression gains new meaning. It is also to be noted that the prophet is here simply carrying out an earlier threat, viz., to restrain her from the sanctuary and withhold the offerings (cf. 2:9, 11, 13).

There remains the last expression of the verse "a lethekeh of barley" (ולתך שערים); both words occasion difficulty. The expression is untranslatable. The consonants vocalized as "lethekeh" have no known root. The Vulgate rendering "one

half kor" goes back to the Mishnah and so far as can be seen ends there in a guess based on the context, which seems to require some measure of grain subordinate to a homer. But the position of the word, even if well attested, preceded and followed by שְׁעִירִים "barley" and yet set off by a conjunction as if an independent measure, is most suspicious. The Versions feel the incongruity and in desperation represent the two words by $\nu\acute{\epsilon}\beta\epsilon\lambda$ οἴνου "a skin of wine." This is natural enough and attractive so far as the thought is concerned but $\nu\acute{\epsilon}\beta\epsilon\lambda$ gives no hope whatever of representing לֶתֶךְ. The common use of wine as an offering is sufficient to suggest the expression and one cannot escape the suspicion that 1 S. 1:24 furnished the exact phrase, cf. 1 S. 10:3. The Versions here have no textual value that can be trusted but that does not leave them without value, for it shows that the translators felt that they were dealing not with the price paid for a slave, but with the customary offerings, and this is of first importance. Both Hebrew words are most probably corrupt and the least that one can do with them is to attempt to restore them, although the verse to this point is clear without them. Yet if we have thus far correctly interpreted it, it is true that we should expect one other thing in it. In v. 2 a Gomer has been turned back when on her way to the sanctuary and since v. 3 naturally implies that she is now at home, v. 2 b is the one point in the book where Hosea's place of residence might legitimately be expected.

It is a rather remarkable fact that Hosea of all the pre-exilic writing prophets is associated with no particular place either in his own words or in any editorial tradition (the book of Nahum is only an apparent exception), while the late Jewish and Christian traditions, by their utter lack of coherence, placing him in such diverse and unlikely places at Babylonia and North Africa, show their unreliable character (cf. *ICC*. p. 202). I believe this lack to be due very largely to a corruption of the last two words of v. 2, and here the whole difficulty arose from the change of order of two contiguous letters, that is by reversing the order of ל and ה in וְלֶתֶךְ we get a regular form וְהֵלֶךְ "and she came," and what follows is naturally a place name indicating destination; and it should give us the home of the prophet.

Now there is no place name known consisting of these radicals

but if we read the initial letter as שׁ instead of שׂ we get a well attested location; but Jerome is a witness that as late as his day there was no difference between these two letters. The error here is the very slightest and is directly accounted for when once the first form ותרך had been confused by a copyist, for then there was nothing to indicate a place name in שׁערים while the near presence of שׂערים "barley" attracted it to itself and this was done the more readily since by this procedure a semblance of meaning could be given to the corrupted form ורתך, that is, a barley measure of some sort.

The whole verse will now read: "And I caused her to turn back to me with fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley, and she came to Sha'araim (v. 3) and I said unto her," etc. The connection with the preceding and following is now direct and straightforward, Gomer is forced to return home while on her way to the degrading rites that she loved and is restrained from visiting the shrines, not however as the consort of the prophet but as an unclean alien, "a woman" tabooed by her own conduct. So shall it be with the nation, for the same reason (v. 4).

There may have been more than one place name Sha'araim in Palestine (cf. 1 Ch. 4:31 and Josh. 15:32, 19-6), but there is only one that is well attested. This is located by two contexts. 1 S. 17:52 and Josh. 15:36 both agree in placing it in the same relative position in the Shephelah, on the border of the Philistine plain, almost directly west of Bethlehem. The reference in Samuel locates it in the vale of Elah on the way of the route of the Philistines after the slaughter of Goliath, at the point where the fugitives separated, some turning toward Ekron, others fleeing into Gath, and if Gath be located at Tell-es-Safi, then Sha'araim must be in the immediate neighborhood on the eastward side. This location lends some weight to the tradition preserved by Jerome that Hosea was born at Bethshemesh, not indeed of Issachar as he had it but in the Shephelah not more than ten miles from Sha'araim. (The Masoretes uniformly vocalize the name as a dual, the LXX 1 S. 17:52 reads the plural Sha'arim. Sha'ar yam "Westgate" is equally possible and as marking the gateway to the plain from the hills such a designation would have been a very natural one.)

We are thus obliged to consider the possibilities of Hosea's Judaic origin, first to ascertain whether there is anything which excludes it, since it has generally been assumed that his home was in the north; and secondly to see whether anything in the book gains any added significance if we place him in the south. It has been claimed that the book contains Aramaisms as evidence of its northern origin (cf. *ICC*. 202) but this has also been vigorously denied. It is at most very indecisive. Hosea's interest in the northern kingdom is supposed to point in the same direction; on the other hand Amos, although from the south, has apparently no interest outside of north Israel, yet Hosea has a very considerable interest in Judah (cf. 5:5; 10-14; 6:4; 8:14; 12:2). There are more northern place names in Hosea than in Amos but the proportion corresponds very closely to the relative size of the two books. The mention of "the land" (1:2) applied to North-Israel and "our king" (7:6) does not tell in what part of Palestine the prophet lived, at least in the days of Jeroboam II, in whose reign Hosea's work began (cf. 1:4, 2 Kings 14:8-25), for at that time Judah was scarcely more than a province of Israel, and in the days of political confusion that followed when Judah gradually gained a measure of independence (cf. 5:13, 14; 6:4), it is very doubtful whether Judah recovered her suzerainty over the Shephelah (cf. 2 Ki. 16:5-6) before the fall of Samaria (cf. Mic. 1:14). Again Hosea's greater knowledge of the internal affairs of N. Israel as compared with Amos, his analysis of political parties and social conditions, have been utilized in the same direction. But Israel's dominance of Judah in this period, the circumscribed limits of the land and the common traditions of the nation do not permit any fixed exclusions of residence in this case. At most the customary arguments make a northern origin plausible, no direct evidence to the contrary and hitherto there has been no possibility of such evidence. This explains the uniformly optimistic assurance of the commentators on this point. At no time has the evidence been used to exclude the possibility of residence elsewhere, since that problem has never before seriously presented itself. The books of Amos and Micah present a fair analogy. Remove one word from the editorial tradition of Amos ("Tekoa" 1:1) and no available grounds remain in the book for locating the prophet outside of Israel, much less

for placing him in southern Judah. Leave a single word out of the editorial tradition of Micah ("Morashtite" 1:1, since Jer. 26:18 probably rests upon this) and no available reasons remain for locating Micah's home in the Shephelah. But with such a clue at hand many things in both books admirably suit the place designation and gain thereby added force and clearness. Can the same principle be applied to Hosea? There was a detachment about the Shephelah, physically, which permitted its inhabitants to regard both Israel and Judah as in a measure separate from them while still belonging to them; this is noticeable in Micah, and corresponds well to Hosea's common rebuke of both Israel and Judah. Hosea's interest in Egypt (cf. 8:13; 9:3, 6; 11:1, 5; 12:1, 9; 13:4) is striking. It is not merely that he is acquainted with the political intrigues with Egypt but as a possible place of captivity it vies in his mind with Assyria. If he dwelt at Sha'araim, he was very near the direct route of trade and diplomatic relations between Israel and Egypt, and Egypt itself was near enough to make it prominent in his vision of the future, his interest in the Egyptian party was then most natural, and it helps to explain the large place given to that country, when as a matter of fact Assyria was at the time by far the most threatening factor in the political situation.

The condemnation of Elisha's revolution (cf. 1:4) is no doubt explainable from a northern prophet, a century after the event, but the sense of detachment in the form of statement is remarkable. It would have been so easy to have said that the house of Ahab was bad but the house of Jehu is worse, but what he virtually says is that the house of Ahab was good and the house of Jehu is bad. This inaccuracy and blurring of the historical perspective is not easily attributed to a great northern prophet even a century after. It is much more understandable coming from a man whose home was in the Shephelah. Ch. 8:4 is commonly interpreted as a condemnation of the schism between Israel and Judah. It is again no doubt possible to conceive of a northern prophet taking this attitude but it must be granted that it is strangely abrupt, if it originated in the north. The North was in the ascendancy, it had taken the initiative in breaking away and it was in their power to do something to heal the breach, but there is not another hint in the book that Israel ought

to return to the house of David. On the other hand from a man whose sympathies were more naturally with the South, the statement of 8:4 is a complete one and the diagnosis normal and natural.

One other problem presents itself in this connection. It is generally held that it is well-nigh impossible to extend Hosea's work beyond the period of the Syro-Ephraimitic war since his book contains no echo of that conflict, but some have felt the desirability of extending his life-work beyond that point. The difficulty here in the case of a northern prophet has probably not been over-estimated, but for a man in the southwestern foothills the difficulty is to say the least very much lessened. I venture, therefore, to conclude that the proposition to locate Hosea at Sha'araim does not face greater difficulties than would be the case with either Amos or Micah if the homes of these prophets had been lost in a similar manner until now.

The main proposition, which it is sought to establish in this paper, namely, that Hosea's domestic tragedy was primarily the result of a religious struggle, and of the same kind as his experience with the nation, does not depend upon the explanation suggested for 3:2, but rather upon the ability of this proposal to remove the chasm between chapters 1 and 3, and to utilize all the data of these chapters in a natural and legitimate manner. On the other hand, if the explanation offered for 3:2 be accepted, the main contention of this article becomes inevitable. It is moreover to be noted that the proposed reading of the last clause of 3:2, which involves the home of the prophet, is equally valid as a suggestion however one take the first part of the verse and whether chapter 3 be taken as a direct statement of chapter 1 or in the more usual manner.