

idea of love conquering the power of sin, is to bring into his prophecies a thought which can be read there only by force. What we seem compelled to conclude by the actual facts as they present themselves is, that in the parts of chs. iv.-xiv. which unquestionably contain the actual utterances of Hosea, there appears to be "no assurance of a final triumph of the divine love or of a penitent return of the sinful nation." Scathing denunciation of Israel's sin and folly, and unequivocal threatening of inevitable punishment, rather than assurance of the unchangeableness of the divine love, these form the burden of Hosea's prophecies.

It appears, therefore, that those who place the emphasis at the latter point do so largely because of the view they hold of the nature and origin of the introductory chapters and the Messianic sections; and this view is not in harmony with the genuine contents of chs. iv.-xiv. On the other hand, the conclusions reached regarding these first three chapters, from comparing them with other books, are in closest harmony with the remainder of the book. And in this there is at least an indirect confirmation of the last explanation suggested as to their origin. For if, as Davidson suggests, these chapters have been prepared by the prophet himself as a "kind of introductory programme containing the essential conception of his teaching, which he had abstracted from his prophetic speeches," then we may expect to find in these prophetic speeches that this "essential conception" will receive the chief emphasis. But when an examination of these speeches indicates that the emphasis is elsewhere, it at least raises the question as to whether chs. i.-iii. bear the relation supposed to the remainder of the book. On the other hand, when we look upon them as the production of a later writer who prepared them as an introduction to Hosea's prophecies by using Ez. xvi. and xxiii. as his models, we are not forced to find in them the central principle of Hosea's teaching, but only an allegory which this writer found to be a convenient way of making that prophet's utterances applicable to both kingdoms. In this case the particular point in the allegory may well be the harlotry of the brides, rather than the abiding love of the husband.