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Politics in Amos

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POLITICS IN AMOS

A Research Paper
Presented to
the faculty of
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts in Biblical Studies

by
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APPROVED BY

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ABSTRACT

One of the characteristics for the end of this twentieth century is a political chaos and a lack of solid foundations. The cry for peace is louder than ever in the past history of human life. Yet, the actions of man and their consequences bring forth only injustice and the oppression of the poor. The "self" of man does not change, even if it functions under different so-called political systems.

Perhaps man's politics or its policies are false or simply they are wrongly executed. It is a repeated mistake, when certain known things are separated from the style and actions of man's life. The Book of Amos produces a classical example of failure to realize this God given principle. The men of Israel "knew," but acted contrary to it.

The pages of this research, after presenting the introductory material (time, social conditions, etc.) reveal the fulness of Amos' theology, a deeper knowledge of the nature and character of the Living God.

This Living God and His love should be the standard for the citizens of Israel. The standard is the guide post or "politics" of Israel. It is accomplished by a careful and exegetical study of choice paragraphs of the book of Amos as well as by the discussion

of choice topics related to the subject.

A special note of thanks is given to my wife, Mrs. Ruth L. Suski, for her hard work and patience while typing the pages of this research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

TIME

The first verse of "Amos" is a key for proper understanding of the prophecy's background.

The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa-- what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was King of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was King of Israel. (1:1; NIV)

The eighth century is suggested as the ground for this prophecy. Israel's history is solely involved with the time of Jeroboam II and not the kings following his day. Jeroboam II was the fourth successive descendant of Jehu's dynasty and was one of Israel's most capable rulers.¹

The usual date for the reign of Jeroboam II is from 782/81 to 753 B. C.² Yet, some scholars find a conflict in giving a date of his death. By some of them, his death was set as early as 747 B. C., and by others as much as three or four years later.³

There might be a difference of view in years, but all the scholars speak about the same king of Israel. Amos' appearance in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II is attested by the report that the prophet had announced this king's death by the sword, a threat which Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, conveyed to Jeroboam

(7:10-11).

Jehoash, the predecessor of Jeroboam II, had begun to remedy Israel's weakness before the Azamaeus of Damascus. Under Jehu and Jehoahaz earlier, this weakness had been obvious, but Jehoash had done much to recover the land that Israel had lost to the northern neighbor. Jeroboam II now continued where Jehoash had left off and regained not only all that Israel had lost but added much more.

Amos recalls military success through which Jeroboam II rounded out the victories of his father Jehoash (II Kings 13:24-28; 14:25, 28). In 6:13 reference is made to conquests east of the Jordan, to the victorious battles at Carnaim in Bashan and Lodebar in Gilead. Jeroboam II was not content with these successes. Like David, he carried the battle into the enemy's own country. He established his own governors in order to guarantee a consistent political and economic administration. Perhaps, the settlement listed in I Chronicles 5:3-26 is actually meant to give a picture of the situation in Jeroboam's time. Thus it would follow that, together with his political expansion, he had also undertaken a strong colonizing movement. The tribe of Manasshe settled as far as Salkah, a southern spur of Mount Hermon, and the tribe of Reuben extended their raids, with flock and shepherd as far as the Euphrates.⁴

Since Jeroboam II gained control over so much of the northern territory, it follows that he must have also recovered Transjordan,

which Hazael had seized. With these former boundries restored, Israel became the largest and most influential country along the eastern Mediterranean. The name of Jeroboam II and his politics certainly were widely known and respected.

Jeroboam II is named as a "Savior of Israel."

In normal usage, the word "savior, redeemer" has already acquired a religious if not messianic meaning. For the total overall view of history in ancient times, however, it is characteristic for earthly kings, in their connection with the pivotal points of time, to be designated as "savior and redeemer;" nor is this true only in the case of pious kings, faithful to Yahweh. Even the Assyrian king Adad-nirari is called "savior." Mesha, king of Moab, calls himself simply "savior." The word "savior" has accordingly, a primarily political meaning. But since politics and religion were not to be separated, the meaning is always included. Every event in history was referred to God or to the gods. In Israel it was Yahweh who always sent a savior in times of crisis. In this series of savior figures, Jeroboam II now takes his place. "The Lord saved them by the hand of Jeroboam ben-Joash" (II Kings 14:27). ⁵

The neighbor on the northern border of Israel was Syria. The nation of Syria was overthrown by the Assyrian empire, that destroyed the capital during the reign of Adad-nirari III (811-783 B. C.). ⁶ That is why Israel was relieved of one of her greatest oppressors. After their victory over the Syrians, the Assyrians entered a period of decline which removed them as a threat to Israel also. During that time, Egypt was weakened by internal discussion and disorganization. All of these conditions developing at one time enabled Israel to get on her feet. She began by expanding her trade

and her economy in general. There was no longer a need for a payment of the tribute to one of her previous oppressors.

The second given name refers to Uzziah, the king of Judah. The dates for his reign are 792/91 to 740/39 B. C., a period of over fifty years.⁷ He was a strong king and followed a life pattern approved by God. Uzziah, also called Azariah (II Kings 14:21; 15:1, 6, 8) brought improvement in Judah's position approximately at the same time as Israel's enlargement was made under Jeroboam II. Between the two men, the total land area controlled came to rival even that of the days of David and Solomon.

In the south, Uzziah maintained the control which his father, Amaziah, had gained over Edom and in addition built facilities at Elath on the Gulf of Zqaba for the purpose of trade (II Kings 14:22; II Chronicles 26:2). Toward the east he accepted gifts from the Amorites, indicating a dominion imposed upon them. Toward the west, he won a couple of battles with the Philistines, and seized several of their cities including Gath.⁸

Judah was made into a strong, vigorous kingdom with armies, fortifications, trade routes and powerful political alliances. The two aggressive kings of Judah and Israel carried their kingdoms along in the same stride from victory to victory. It was a period of expansion, freedom, activity, and so-called prosperity and peace. No one had any anxiety or fear of invasion. They could not imagine

that the powerful Assyrian empire would return after a temporary lull. It is always tragic to watch a nation in its supreme moment of success and realize that it is but the prelude to the hour of darkest doom.

The exact date for "Amos" cannot be fixed, but his message was delivered two years before the earthquake (1:1). The words "two years before the earthquake" do not help today, because it is no longer known when this earthquake happened. Surely, for the people who lived closer to the lifetime of Amos the earthquake was clearly something which they remembered or had heard their parents speak of, so it would help them to fix the date. In the South Pacific islands, people often fix dates by mentioning a hurricane - "That good crop of oranges was two years after the big hurricane;" but that is no help to outsiders who do not know when the hurricane occurred.⁹

It must have been very severe, however, for it is mentioned also by Zechariah (14:5-7), who lived following the Babylonian exile well over two centuries later. Josephus, in his Antiquities, IX, 10, 4 states that it occurred at the time when Uzziah went into the temple to offer incense and was smitten with leprosy (II Chronicles 26:16ff).¹⁰

A total eclipse of the sun seems to have accompanied it (supposedly to be referred to in 8:9), which astronomers have calculated as having taken place June 15th of 763 B. C. If so, then the date for the prophet's work would have to be somewhere about

760 B. C. ¹¹

Did the prophet perhaps prophesy concerning the earthquake before it struck? In 9:1 he speaks of God's smitting the pillars of the Bethel sanctuary so that the thresholds shake and the building crashes about the heads of the worshippers. If this prophecy is dated early in Amos' ministry, then the prophet is announcing the destruction of Bethel before it takes place. When the earthquake struck, the people remembered the words of the prophet. Amos had indeed spoken the truth. The world in which he lived needed to be shaken, and he knew that it would be shaken.

Perhaps it is wise to conclude that though the times of Amos were encouraging to the people, they failed to perceive the signs of God.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

The book of Amos underlines a vivid picture of the social and religious conditions of Israel at that time. It was a period of unprecedented prosperity. Wealth abounded and the citizens gave themselves over to a life of luxury and self-indulgence.

During this period when neither Damascus nor Assyria posed a threat to Israel, Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel enjoyed reigns of prosperity unequalled since the days of Solomon. The advantages now realized were not enjoyed by all the people of the

nation, however. The middle class had disappeared. Their departure left but two classes, the rich and the poor. A rich merchant class developed and merchants and nobles alike built elaborate houses and revelled in the comforts which wealth made possible. Winter houses and summer houses with plenty of hewn stone and ivory paneling were found among the wealthy citizens. "Business was good, wine was plentiful, ivory couches and rich furnishings were provided along with delicacies and stirring music for the feasts and banquets."¹²

Affluence, exploitation and the profit motive were the most notable features of the society which Amos observed and in which he worked. The pride dominated their life (6:13-14). The cities were growing. The merchant class made the money and took the possession of the land until most of the land was concentrated in the hands of a few. There was no justice in the land (3:10), the poor were afflicted, exploited, and even sold into slavery (2:6-8, 5:11). The judges were corrupt too (5:12).

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come! Go to Calneh and look at it; go from there to great Hamath, and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are you better than those kingdoms? Was their land larger than yours? You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror. You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore you will be among the first to go

into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.
(6:1-7 NIV)

"Money-making and personal covetousness ruled all: the men lived for their offices (8:5), the women lived for excitement (4:1), the rulers lived for frivality (6:1-6)." ¹³

The poor were not able to share in the prosperity. Small farmers were put out of business to make room for the estates of the wealthy. Society was divided between the dissolute rich and the embittered poor. Ease and extravagance contrasted with the misery and suffering of the slave population who could not afford the bare necessities of life. There were plenty of palaces and also plenty of hovels. Injustice became widespread as the rich gained economic advantages and favoritism of their leaders and courts. The aristocracy lived for themselves and for the moment, effete, corrupt and vicious. The prophet Amos raised his voice in warning. He lashed out at their unbridled love and pleasure.

Archaeological reports and dry accounts of expeditions shed a powerful light upon these prophetic words.

In Israel, in and around the old mound of ruins that represented ancient Samaria, evidence was lying dormant which would indicate this materialism and luxury in the soil strata from the decades following 800 B. C. in the reign of Jeroboam II. The royal palace of Samaria contained a considerable number of elegant clay tablets inscribed with ink and paint. On sixty-three of these invoices for wine and oil which had been delivered at the Court the senders are the managers of the crown lands of Jeroboam II, farmers and their

employees, whose handwriting is extremely good.

From the same period comes a number of beautifully carved ivories, some of which are expensively embellished with gold and semi-precious stones and ornamented with colorful powdered glass. They showed mythological motifs borrowed from Egypt, like Harpocrates on the lotus flower or figures of gods like Isis and Horus or cherubs. At that time all over Israel granaries and storehouses were being built to hold goods of all descriptions whose supply exceeded demand.¹⁴

In addition to increases economic development and independence, the period was marked by great religious activity. During this time the inhabitants doubtlessly increased the number of their worship centers and multiplied their offerings and sacrifices (4:4-5) beyond all legal requirements. The rich thronged the religious shrines and offered expensive gifts and sacrifices as a means of securing great material blessings. Prosperity was interpreted as a proof of God's blessing. Priests and prophets were delighted to be honored by the wealthy.¹⁵

The religious fervor failed to affect the quality of their day-to-day living. It had no basis outside the mind of man. It continued the counterfeit cult of Jeroboam who had set out nearly two centuries earlier to establish a viable alternative to Jerusalem (I Kings 12:25ff). It all seemed to be a self-justifying enterprise by the time of Amos. The shrines of Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan were still in full operation (4:4; 5:5; 8:14) but under the analytical gaze of Amos they were but exercises in self-pleasing (4:5), abhorrent to God (5:21-23).

The priest, Amaziah, offers us a case-history of the best of the sort of worshippers, but when all came to all, what was he? Establishment-minded (7:10), careful for the ecclesiastical proprieties (7:13) but supremely disinterested in any word from God (7:12, 16). ¹⁶

The spiritually-religious conditions did not produce or make "better" moral behaviour. The religious leaders were professional preachers. Immorality was rife, the righteous were hated and opposed. There was much insincerity and cant and superstition in the sort of ritual they called worship. Gross immorality was openly aided and abetted by the religious leaders. Amos could speak of sexual indulgence (2:7), transgressions and sins (5:12) and commercial sharp practice (8:5, 6) as matters on which he could not be proved wrong.

These men were incapable of seeing the inner flaws which the keen eyes of Amos could see so clearly. They did not know God. The Lord God was treated as one of the gods of the land of Canaan kindly beings identified with the desires and fortunes of their adherents. ¹⁷

The people were utterly lacking in the knowledge that would let them understand the true nature of religion. The idea of God as the Lord of history, once so close to them, was going away from their daily life. They preferred to make the Lord a superior "Baal," rather than God of all the earth. His being and power were limited to their own immediate interests. The very world-wide sovereignty

of the Lord had fallen into popular misconception "of making the very greatness of God simply a national asset." ¹⁸

Instead of plain living, the people of Israel knew drunkenness, extravagant meals, carousals, lolling on soft couches, idling away precious time while swift retribution made its way toward them. Divine sanction was claimed for what was really merciless oppression of the poor. The name of the righteous God was involved upon crass human selfishness. It is possible to end saying, that the heart of citizens was lost. There were only played politics to fulfill their own selfish desires.

THE PROPHET

It was to this scene of degenerate political, moral and religious behaviour that Amos addressed himself. Usually, under such circumstances a prophet of doom is not wanted. Yet some time after 760 B. C., Amos who would not associate himself with the professional prophets of his day, but who clearly showed evidence of prophetic calling dared to pronounce divine judgment upon the people of Israel. He, a Judean from Tekoa, was regarded as a treasonous outsider when he dared to prophesy the fall of the dynasty of Jeroboam II (7:9). Amos is called "one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit." ¹⁹ He is described as "the first Great Reformer." ²⁰

The word אָנִיבִּי by derivation might mean "burden-bearer," but really the significance of the name is obscure. The verbs אָנִיבִּי and וָאָנִיבִּי mean "to load" or "carry a load."²¹ Possibly the meaning is passive "born (by God)," and might be compared to the Phoenician name Eshmunamos.²² Amos the prophet should not be confused with Amuz, אָמִיז the father of Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1). Contrary to the custom in the prophetic books, the prophet's parentage does not appear (Hosea 1:1; Isaiah 1:1). No other person bearing the same name is mentioned in the Old Testament. There is an Amos mentioned in the genealogical series (Luke 3:25), but he is otherwise unknown, and there is no knowledge of how his name would have been written in Hebrew.

Not very much is known about the life of Amos, besides the information found in the book itself. His home town is Tekoa (1:1; 7:12), located about six miles southeast of Bethlehem and twelve miles south of Jerusalem. The town was fortified by Rehoboam (II Chronicles 11:6). "Previous to this Joab, David's cousin and general, was sent to Tekoa for a 'wise woman' and intrigued her to persuade David to bring back Absalom."²³

Tekoa was situated 2,500 feet above sea level and commanded an awesome view looking east toward the Dead Sea and the Wilderness of Judea. The town is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament in II Samuel 14:2; 23:26; II Chronicles 11:6; Nehemiah 3:27; and

Jeremiah 6:1. The word itself is derived from a root meaning "to pitch a tent," or "to blow a trumpet." Perhaps the first meaning is more accurate, for it suggests a place where nomadic shepherds pitched their tents.²⁴ In the time of Josephus and Jerome it was a "little village" on a high hill, one that is possible to see daily.²⁵

The surrounding terrain was rugged and uninviting. It was a type of country that develops hardy manhood in those who would draw their living from it.

Amos was rooted in the desert... The wide open spaces in which he lived are reflected in the amplitude of his spiritual vision... All his similes and metaphors reflect the bare gaunt background of the desert. His task, too, was his teacher. He must be quick to detect the rustle of the gliding snake and know the way of the lion and the bear. Every sound in the desert is significant, and the shepherd must know its meaning... The desert was the school of Amos, and in that school his powers of observation were developed and his faculties sharpened in high degree.²⁶

In this wilderness of Judea, John the Baptist has spent some time and later Jesus spent there "a time of temptation" for forty days! Across this wilderness swept the hot winds of the south, and from its hills could be heard the roar of the lion, the cry of the jackal, and the bleating of sheep as their sounds echoed from one canyon wall to the other. This environment had prepared the prophet well for the stern task to which he was called and is reflected most colorfully in his preaching.

Amos had worked as a shepherd (1:1) or a herdsman (7:4). The word רָעָה is not the usual Old Testament word for one who followed this occupation. The text gives a participle form רָעָה־קָטָן . It is defined as "a short-legged and deformed race of sheep in the Bahrein province of Arabia, from which comes the proverb 'viller than a nakad'." ²⁷ This special variety of dwarfed-sized sheep are highly prized for their fine wool. This word for shepherd is applied to Mesha King of Moab (II Kings 3:4), where it means "sheepmaster," "sheep breeder" or "sheep owner." This suggests that Amos may have been the owner of flocks of sheep and thus a man of some standing in his community.

The verb רָעָה comes from רָעָה meaning a "herd" or "cattle."

רָעָה often refers to a group of cattle or "herd" (both sexes), as it does in Genesis 13:5: "And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds (in the Hebrew, this word appears in a singular form) and tents." The word can represent a "small group of cattle" (not a herd; Genesis 47:17; Exodus 22:1) or even a pair of oxen (Numbers 7:17). A single ox is indicated either by some other Hebrew word or called an offspring of oxen (Genesis 18:7). ²⁸

Therefore, the two words apply to taking care of both cattle and sheep. Yet, a "small group of cattle" may refer to the specific group of sheep taken care of by Amos.

It is worthy to note that shepherds played an important role throughout Biblical history. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob were shepherds. Moses was leading the flocks of Jethro when God called him to lead his people out of Egypt. David was tending sheep when God appointed him shepherd over Israel. Shepherds were the first to greet the Christ child on the night of His birth. Jesus was proud to identify Himself with these men of the past and to refer to Himself as the Good Shepherd.

Amos may also have been an expert fruit-grower, since he spoke of himself as a "dresser" of sycamore trees. The sycamore of Palestine is a type of fig tree that flourishes in the lowlands. It is a large tree with widespread branches. They produce a small sweet fruit that was much in demand especially among the poorer classes of people.²⁹ There is no doubt, that the occupations of Amos played an important role in shaping his life and thought.

Whether Amos was, or had been poor, or whether he had always been moderately well-to-do (though living a simple life) cannot be ascertained. At least his time seems to have been his own.

Nothing is known regarding the call of Amos except the statement: "But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (7:15). There is no indication here as to the nature of the message which the prophet was to preach. Yet, it is clear, he considered himself to be under the absolute control of One mightier than he. Amos had no other choice but to obey. "The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has

spoken, who can but prophesy?" (3:8). This sense of divine call is the hallmark of the Hebrew prophet. He found in his bones a fire burning, an inner constraint that he was unable to control (Jeremiah 20:9ff). It is obvious, that the message of Amos was neither accidental nor trivial.

Amos differed from Hosea and from most other prophets in that he was not full-time in this work. This is evident from the occupations he had performed before. There is also a significant statement made by Amos to Amaziah, priest in Bethel. He told Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd... But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (7:14-15). It was an imperious challenge that could not be denied. Nothing short of instant obedience could please his God.

As noted above, Amos was not of the priestly nor prophetic line, but was called to be a prophet of Israel while engaged in his humble occupations. God had called him for a time out of lay activity into the prophetic ministry. Amos' own words put him in line with all the prophets who, in various modes of expression claimed a direct revelation from God. For Amos, prophets were raised up by the Lord (2:11), to whom He reveals His secrets (3:7, 8).

The term "son of the prophets" was used for students in the prophetic schools of the time of Elijah and Elisha. It should be

realized, however that Amos lived several decades after the time of Elijah and Elisha. Therefore, there is no way of knowing whether those schools still existed.³⁰ Whatever meaning lies beyond the terminology used, it is clear, Amos was not a prophet in the early part of his life.

Amos, a simple Judean, was sent to the Northern Kingdom, where people felt no need for preaching. There is no precise answer as to how he preached in Bethel, the religious capital of Israel. The faithful prophet was, in the end, silenced by the hireling Amaziah, a priest who sought to save himself and his position. Perhaps finally Amos was driven away from Israel.

It may be concluded that the character of Amos was simple and humble. He was deeply religious. His keen insight into the deeper things of God was almost unbelievable. The man had been molded by the stern discipline of the desert to look objectively upon persons, nations and events.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER II

EXEGESIS

PRELUDE

Politics represent the art or science of government. Yet, it is difficult to formulate a precise definition of "political philosophy" because it seems to have no special subject matter of its own. Its main tasks are in part to describe past and existing social organizations (economics, political science, anthropology, biology, sociology), and in part to evaluate these organizations (ethics).

The introductory material reveals Judah and Israel as kingdoms, and therefore they represent a monarchical type of government. The politics are observed particularly in the life of the King and the aristocracy. The purpose of this work is not to discuss if it was a right type of government or simply the results of a failure to obey the Almighty God. Definitely, something was wrong at the time of Amos. The known principles of God were not walking in line with life.

Political philosophy has a great task of finding the ultimate justification for the existence of any form of government. The daily life in Israel so beautifully painted by Amos, should produce

a clear picture of the accepted politics. Yet, the book emphasizes anew the principles that had long been announced to the people:

"The wicked will return to the Sheol, even all the nations who forget God" (Psalms 9:17). "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34, NIV). The prophecy of Amos points out clearly that "It is abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established on righteousness (Proverbs 16:12).

The word "politics" in these pages refers to Israel's way of life. They were chosen by God Himself (3:2) and He was supposed to have been their guide-post, their "politics." Every aspect of life for the people of Israel was surrounded around God. The citizens of Israel began to disobey their "politics," and even work their own way around justice. Justice in the Scripture is a "revelational" bond which links persons together in a community of mutual responsibility and mutual rights. It is the prime characteristic of the covenant relationship which binds God to the people of Israel and the people to each other. Justice means seeking to protect and enhance the lives of individuals by continually building connections of mutual support in community and society. Where there is no such vision, both individual people and "the people" as a whole will perish.

The careful exegetical study of chosen paragraphs will reveal the

real politics of Israel's daily life at the time of Amos.


INJUSTICE 2:6b-7a

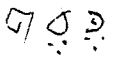
The primary task of Amos was the arraignment of Israel. To build the attention of the people, first of all he condemned the surrounding nations. He began his speech as a politician who is popular with his own people. It pleased the ears of the citizens to hear "the fire of God" coming upon their old enemies (1-2).

The prophet's concept of God and His creation was far away from them. Amos saw himself and all other men as having been created by God. He and they had been created in the image of God. Since the Creator was a moral being, those created in His image were also. Therefore, every moral standard set by the Creator was to be observed by every man whether a citizen of a covenant nation or not. Any man or any nation ignoring God's standard or refusing to meet it was placed under judgment. The men of Israel knew how to read the signs of the nature (3:3-6), but had failed to understand the presence of the prophet of God amongst them.

While Amos preached the condemnation of the nations he was gaining the favor to Israel. He established the fact that sin among any nation and every nation would provoke God to judgment. Thus when the politician began to accuse his own people because he tried to obey God, he was welcomed no more. Their politics brought so many

sins, that only the Lord could keep the account. Nothing could stop the Mighty God from pronouncing the judgment upon them.

The inhuman treatment of the poor came out as the citizens played their politics. "For they sold the righteous for silver." The noun  means "just," "lawful" or "righteous." The man who is righteous tries to preserve the peace and prosperity of the community by fulfilling the commands of God in regard to others. In the supreme sense the righteous man is one who serves God (Malachi 3:18). Righteousness is the quality of relationships between individuals. It works only through conformity to standards set out in the Word of God. ¹ The righteous man is innocent of any punishable crime. ² Thus, such a man is "in the right in a law suit," and he "has right on his side" because precisely he is "right with God." ³ It might be said that the righteous man understands and walks according to the politics of his life.

The noun for silver is , which also means "money," "price" or "property." This word represents the "metal ore silver": "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer" (Proverbs 25:4). It may signify the "metal silver," or what has been refined from silver ore (Genesis 24:53; I Kings 10:21). "Silver" was often a form of wealth (Genesis 13:2; Genesis 42:25). It can be used in the sense of "valuable property." A slave equals money (Exodus 21:21). ⁴ The "silver" refers to the

smallest silver money piece, thus it magnifies the tragic level of their injustice.⁵ For little or nothing a man could buy a decision in his favor regardless of his own guilt or the innocence of the other party.

The verb מָכַר ⁹/₆ "to sell" has no reference to the conduct of a corrupt judge.⁶ It probably describes the selling of a person into slavery, that follows the natural meaning of the following clause: "and the poor for a pair of sandals."

"A pair of sandals" נַעֲלָיו ⁷/₇ are greatly inferior in value to shoes. They were made out "of leather or wood, fastened by two straps to the feet, one of which passes over the forepart of the foot, near the great toe, and the other round the ankle."⁷ A poor man pressed under obligations was sold into slavery for the price of his obligation. If a man had a debt for a pair of shoes and could not meet the due date, he would be sold into slavery for the price of his indebtedness. On the other hand, the statement may refer to a practice of selling men into slavery for a mere pittance. In the other case, it expresses greed and disrespect for mankind. It could not go unnoticed.

A Hebrew who "waxed poor" could sell himself to another of his people, but he was not to be considered as a slave. He was to be treated as a hired servant (Leviticus 25:39-46). This law was being violated. There is no indication in the law that one could

be sold in payment for a debt. "They sold harvest folk for money," gives the sense satisfactorily.⁸ "They" in the general sense means the nation as a whole. Logically, however, the subject of the sentence is the judges (5:12) or possibly the creditors.

The charge of injustice is followed by a charge of oppression of the poor. "Who pant for the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek" (2:7a).

The verb נָחַץ has two meanings: "grasp," "pant," "pant after," and "crush," "trample upon."⁹ Possibly, the original thought is "crush the heads of the poor upon the dust" (Isaiah 3:15). "The meaning of the prophet is, that the persons whom he describes were so avaricious, that after having robbed others of their property, and reduced them to a state of poverty, they even begrudged them the small quantity of dust which they had cast on their heads in token of mourning."¹⁰

For this purpose, they sought every means of humbling others, turn aside, bend, distort, the way of the meek, those who submitted to God's will as His obedient servants.

The adjective "meek" נָחֵץ means "oppressed, afflicted, wretched," but everywhere with the accessory idea of humility.¹¹ The one, who is "meek" prefers to suffer wrong rather than to do wrong, and therefore he enjoys God's favour.

Perhaps there can be drawn a distinction between נָחַץ and נָחַץ

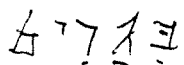
"that the former is applied to those who patiently suffer without resistance; the latter is those who willingly endure with submission what they might escape from" ¹² The "meek" are brought into a trap or into destruction by impediments and stumblingblocks laid in their path.

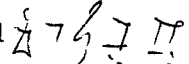
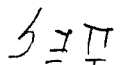
The unrighteous cannot rest until they have brought the poor down to the very depths of sorrow. And because the meek are not forward in presenting and maintaining their just case, they are taken advantage of and their cause is perverted (Isaiah 10:2).

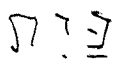
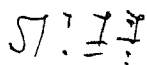
PROFANE OF THE HOLY NAME 2:7a-8

These words picture another part of politics that were played in daily life. With injustice and hardheartedness gross immorality is connected, "a man (son) and his father will go (in) to the (same) girl." Amos was referring to the custom of "temple prostitution," which was widely practiced in Old Testament times. This degrading practice was borrowed from the Canaanites. The Israelites are accused of taking part in pagan worship. Many of the pagan peoples believed that the gods or spirits which they worshipped could control the fertility of the earth, and of human beings and animals. They regarded the sexual act as a sign of fertility, and it was their custom to perform such acts as a part of their worship at the shrine or temple. They believed that this would please the

practice of prostitution within the holy places. It should be emphasized that probably this was being done not at some Baal shrine, but at Israelite temples dedicated to the worship of God - at Bethel, at Dan, and at Gilead. They had reduced God to the level of Baal, thus regarding Him a little more than a nature-god. ¹⁶ They were unfaithful to the Covenant.

They further showed their contempt for the law of God by keeping the garments taken in pledge, which were to have been returned before night because they were the poor man's covering (Deuteronomy 24:12-13; Exodus 22:26-27). Yet, the word for garments  seems to have a wider reference. "The phrase probably means garments pledged and forfeited to creditors quick to take advantage of the debtor's inability to redeem his pledge." ¹⁷ The poor, righteous man was their least and last concern.

The word  "pledged," literally means "bound," that is "held in bondage." It comes from the verb  "to bind." ¹⁸

Finally, Amos described the drinking of wine bought by the monies acquired through the illegal "sale of justice" by the judges. The word  stays in place of  "in the house." They were celebrating in the Lord's honour, but the true God plainly severs Himself from such rites.

The politics of Israel brought such sins as: injustice, oppression, immorality and luxury. The worship itself was, therefore,

an act of gross hypocrisy.

LUXURY 3:15

The last three verses of the third chapter most likely form an independent rhetorical unit. It was probably delivered in response to a further question regarding the nature of the items of evidence for the coming catastrophe of Israel. The first evidence for the total judgment will be that the horns of the altars of Bethel will be cut off (3:14). But, the next evidence gives a key to what kind of dwelling-place the inhabitants lived in. It seems to be obvious that politics have something to say about the living.

Amos speaks about the winter and summer house. The noun בֵּית "house" denotes a fixed, established structure made from some kind of material. As a "permanent dwelling place" it is usually distinguished from a tent. It can even be applied to a one-room dwelling (Genesis 19:2). It signifies rooms or wings of a house (Esther 2:3; Genesis 6:14). Sometimes, it refers to the place where something or someone dwells or rests. ¹⁹

The nobleman of Bethel had built warm houses for the winter season and summer houses for the hot dry season. This may refer either to separate buildings (Jeremiah 36:22), or to one building or two levels, with a heatable lower level and a cooler upper

level (Judges 3:20).

Another ancient text gives such reference: "...was apparently meant to remedy the drawback that the kings of Sam'al had only one palace to serve as both their summer and winter quarters." ²⁰

According to this, then, the designations "winter house" and "summer house" meant houses differently situated, erected for appropriate seasonal use. Already in the ninth century, King Ahab of Israel owned one palace in the warmer plain of Jezreel (I Kings 21:1) and another on Mount Samaria (I Kings 21:18).

These terms refer more than just to the royal buildings. The prosperity and "good" politics of the rich had allowed them to fulfill their pride by constructing residences like those which earlier only kings could build (6:11). Such buildings were regarded by the prophet as needlessly extravagance and unjust gain and pride.

The Lord Himself will strike these houses. There are different applications to the word $\text{ךָ} \text{נָ} \text{ךָ}$, meaning "smite, strike, hit, beat, slay, kill." ²¹ Someone may "smite" an object with one, non-fatal strike. It can be a person, an animal or a thing (Numbers 22:23, 25, 27; Psalms 3:7; Exodus 21:26; Exodus 17:6). There are passages where $\text{ךָ} \text{נָ} \text{ךָ}$ describes the beating of some object. Usually, it refers to some kind of fight among people (Exodus 2:11, 13; Nehemiah

13:25; Song of Solomon 5:7). Proverbs notes the importance of beating for the sake of acquiring wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 19:25; 23:13-14). It is also used of murdering another man or killing an animal (Exodus 21:12; Joshua 10:26; I Samuel 17:35). In the studied verse, the root has the sense of an "attack" or "destroying." God is the subject, thus He brings judgment upon men for his sin (I Kings 14:15; Leviticus 26:24).²² On the day He will punish the people, the houses shall be torn down too. Literally $\int \underset{\tau}{y}$ means "upon" or "over." The ruins of one house shall fall upon the top of another.

The second phrase speaks about the houses of ivory and about the large houses. By ivory houses are not meant houses or palaces composed of that material, but richly ornamented with it. The ancients used it for decorating the veillings, panels, doors, and similar items of their room, by inlaying it with other costly articles (I Kings 22:39; Psalms 14:9).

In excavations carried out at Samaria between 1931 and 1935, the British archaeologist J. W. Crawford uncovered hundreds of fragments of beautifully carved ivory. Often these had been decorated with gold leaf or with precious stones, including lapis lazuli, the designs were of Egyptian origin and included the infant Horus, the sphinx, the lotus, and the palm tree, as well as animals and human beings. It is believed that these magnificently carved pieces of ivory were produced by Phonician craftsmen and that they were used as inlays for thrones, couches, and other pieces of fine furniture.²³

Such houses decorated with ivory as well shall perish. The verb לָאָחַז means "to perish in reality, in apprehension, or relatively." ²⁴ Those houses shall be lost, pass away, and will not exist more.

The rendering of $\text{בְּבָיִתָּאֵי קִרְיָא}$, by "large houses," is more agreeable to the connection that of "many houses," though this is equally expressed by the phrase. ²⁵ These large houses will be swept away by the Lord. The verb $\text{וָאָחַז$ applies "to come to an end, cease."

"The judgment which Amos announces is no ascetic primitivism, growing out of simple hostility against a commercial and its affluence." ²⁶ The houses were built, beam by beam and stone by stone, from a stone of crimes. These evil-doings brought complete destruction to their dwelling places. The fulfilment took place when Samaria was taken by Shalmaneser (II Kings 15:5-6).

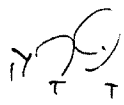
It was not enough to know the politics for daily life, because they were not properly executed. They had to learn the hard way. Their temporary security went away together with their largest houses.

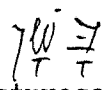
POLITICS OF WOMEN 4:1

When there was no suitable helper for Adam, God created one, called "woman." She was to have been a companion and an aid to

her husband in the accomplishing of the purpose of God for their lives. A wife of noble character is worth more than rubies (Proverbs 31:10). This entire chapter gives a description of such a woman. One would expect women of such quality in abundance in Israel, but this was not the case. Their role in the society of Israel was far short of such an ideal.

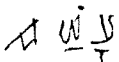
They were called "cows of Bashan who (are) in the Mount of Samaria." Although feminine forms of expression are used here, the possibility exists that it refers to the nobles of Samaria. The feminine was employed only to show the effeminacy of the aristocracy. Yet, there is nothing wrong scripturally, in seeing the extravagant women of the capital of Samaria in this reference.²⁷ Isaiah spoke as well against women of Zion (Isaiah 3:16-26; 32:9-13).

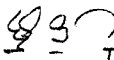
The cow  was never used in the Old Testament as an animal sacrifice. Once the exception was made, where the red heifer was slaughtered and burned outside the camp (Numbers 19:1ff).²⁸ It was used symbolically, when Israel's backsliding was compared to a stubborn cow (Hosea 4:16). Also, in this case, Amos used cow, symbolizing the rediless luxury of the women in Samaria.

, Bashan was celebrated for the richness of its pasturage, and its excellent breed both of large and small cattle (Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalms 22:12; Ezekiel 39:18). It lay on the

east of Jordan, between Hermon and the mountains of Gilead. It extended eastward as far as the cities of Salchak and Edrei, which it included. In the days of Abraham it was occupied by a people called the Rephaim (Genesis 14:5). The land was also known for its oak trees (Isaiah 2:13; Ezekiel 27:6).²⁹

The two main characteristics of the cattle of Bashar were: fat and ferocious. Both of these characteristics fit the women of Samaria. They encouraged their husbands to deal oppressively with the poor in order that they might have an adequate supply of strong drink. Such women were being overindulgent, thoughtless, and demanding.

The verb  refers to the treatment of violence and injustice. It means to load with hard and injurious usage.³⁰ The women of Samaria were doing all that was in opposition of showing mercy.

The basic meaning of the word  is "crush" or "break in pieces" (II Kings 23:12). It was developed to describe "oppression" (I Samuel 12:3) and "maltreatment" (Deuteronomy 28:33).³¹

Because the women made continual demand upon their husbands, they too have responsibility for the brutal oppression of the poor. Their corrupt influence brought disaster to the nation. The husbands could not provide for their requests through honest business pursuits. Their husbands were therefore driven to oppression,

extortion and violence. The victims of such oppression were inevitably the poor and the weak of the land. There is no indication that the first ladies of Samaria had ever given a passing thought to the sources of their income. Their only concern was with their own desires and pleasures. Oppression and idolatry went hand in hand (4:4).

The literal meaning of the verb יָשַׁב is "drink." The first occurrence of יָשַׁב reports that Noah drunk of the wine and was drunken (Genesis 9:21). It is used figuratively of "drinking" iniquity (Job 15:16). "To drink" from a cup does not necessarily involve consuming what is drunk (Genesis 44:5).

This word may be used of a communal activity "eat and drink" (Judges 9:27; Genesis 24:54). "Eat and drink" can signify the eating of a meal. It reflected a "banquet," which included many activities in addition to just eating and drinking (Esther 5:5).³² Perhaps even each woman urged her husband to drink with her, and both were engaged in drunken revelries.

"The present verse illustrates the fact that the modern habit of intemperance amongst women may be a sign, not so much of civilization as of revived paganism (Micah 2:11; Isaiah 5:11-12; 28:7-8).³³ Because of their unconcern for others as well as their irresponsible natures, they would fall prey to the judgment of God and would be humbled as they were led out into captivity (4:2-3).

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER III

GOD OF AMOS

PRELUDE

The book of Amos makes it clear that God really cares for all nations with a genuine intimate love. He leads other people as truly as He is leading Israel. Israel is not better than other nations in the eyes of God. This nation plays only the role of a picture of how God really does function in our world. God deals with each nation according to its own righteousness and punishes its sin impartially. Israel is to be judged by the same principles of common morality which are binding upon the surrounding tribes and nations. God is faithful with Israel, if she (her citizens) walk with Him.

God deals in justice with all nations and not alone with Israel. When a nation's cup of iniquity is full, His righteous judgment will fall. "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem" (1:2). The following pages underline the understanding of God by Amos.

GOD OVER THE NATIONS

Amos, a simple man from the desert came to understand God

better than any of his predecessors. He realized that the Lord was not merely the private God of Israel. For those days this was a remarkable creed. The prophet was convinced that "God is the sole and righteous Governor of the world, judging the people righteously, and when they rebel, dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel." ¹ God has the same right and control over the nations of the earth, moving them from one part of the earth to another, as a master chess player would move his pawns on the board.

He brought Israel out of slavery from the land of Egypt (3:1). Yet, He also brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (9:7). He pronounced judgment upon Israel: "The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise" (5:2), "The end is come upon my people Israel" (8:2). But, He also did as He wished with Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Moab and Ammon (Chs. 1-2, 5:9, 9:7).

Each of these nations had broken God's law not once but many times. For instance, Syria had no liberty to treat people as if they were things (1:3). "Threshing" is what a man does to a thing, a grain crop, in order to extract his own profit from it." ² They treated people as things. Philistia and Phoenicia carried into exile a whole people: young, old, men, women, married, single, rich, poor (1:6, 9). God took notice, as He always does when things

are valued more highly than people. Precisely, the nations received the same sort of treatment which they had given to others.

There is no place in which Amos dealt with God's nature in an abstract manner. God had a special relationship with Israel, but His laws are for all people. The sin of Moab (2:1) was not a crime against Israel, but it was against Edom. Yet, they could not escape the "fire" of God.

Amos vividly described the impossibility of escape from the watchful eye of the Lord. There was only one God over the whole earth, and to Him they, the nations of the individuals, must and would render account.

Not once did Amos use any fixed expression to say that the Lord is "Israel's God," as did both the older tradition and the prophets who came after him.³ He did not acknowledge proper analogies for the Lord, of the sort which Hosea so abundantly presented. Yet, he used frequently graphic illustrations of God's acting.⁴ The very greatness of God was not chosen simply as a national asset.⁵

While each nation recognized the reality of the gods of the peoples surrounding it, it believed that there was one god properly its own. Such theology was (strictly speaking) neither polytheism nor monotheism. A convenient name for it is "henotheism."⁶ For instance, whether Moses was an absolute monotheist, or only a henotheist cannot be stated catagorically. He insisted that for

Israel there was but one God ($\gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma$).

Israel was God's people, but God did not belong only to Israel. They were not capable to control or manipulate God as one does with the puppet. It was not what Israel wanted, but what God desired.

It cannot be neglected, that the Creator had entered into a Covenant relationship with Israel (3:2) a priveleged position that at the same time involved great responsibilities. Because they failed to recognize this situation, the more devastating judgment came upon them than that was incurred by pagan nations. Israel could only expect retribution at the hands of Him who was the Lord of History. He is a much greater God than people think.

According to Amos, the relationship between God and Israel involved national responsibility, not national comfort (3:2). Retributive righteousness brought the nation to the hour of ruin and disaster. The violations of the moral law could not be remedied by means of festive rites, offerings, or litergical indulgence on the part of the sinner. In point of fact, God was already standing beside the altar (9:1ff), poised and ready to shatter it.⁷ Nothing could possibly substitute for the sincere worship of the human spirit, grounded in the high moral and ethical principles of God.

The God of Amos was not a being who could be used and calculated on in the working out of international relationships. He was the God whose will was above all nations, using them for his own purposes,

even when they flouted His laws.⁸

GOD OVER NATURE

Amos maintained that the Lord was the creator and the sustainer of the cosmos (4:13). He determined the incidence of famine (4:6ff) or plenty (9:13). God withheld rain three months before the time of harvest. This is disastrous. Reference is made to the latter rain of the spring which is so vital for the development of the corn and the grain for a bountiful harvest. The withholding was not universal, it rained on one city and not upon another (4:7). This was purposeful to show that the giving or the withholding was not by chance, but by the sovereign act and choice of God. Scarcity of water compelled the inhabitants of the cities visited by drought to go long distances for the necessary water to carry on life.

The blasting and mildew were used for disobedience to the Law of God (Deuteronomy 28:22). Blasting is the effect of the withering east wind from the dry desert. Perhaps man should rediscover the relation between these violent eruptions in nature and the burden of human sin (Proverbs 8:19-23; Luke 13:4-5). God has uncounted forces and powers in His hands to be used at any moment He selects.

From early time Israel's God was pictured as being attended

by earthquake (Judges 5:5). On occasion He "rained fire" (Genesis 19:24), caused pestilence (Exodus 12:29) or sent drought (Genesis 41:27-28). God can, moreover, cause an eclipse of the sun (8:9). He has power in heaven and in underworld, as well as in the bottom of the sea (9:2-3).

The fuller picture of God was reminded in "doxologies," a sort songs in praise to God (4:13, 5:8-9, 9:5-6). Their purpose was to remind of the nature of God who was dealing with Israel. He formed the mountains and created the wind (4:13). He was not the God of one tribe, or the God of one holy place, He was neither a God who could be defeated. He was "the Lord God Almighty," the creator of the universe.

Israel thought of the God of nature as existing for man rather than of man as existing for God.⁹ The God of Amos had a sovereign power in every aspect of nature. He could not be used by man for man's purposes. He required men to be obedient to the divine purpose.

GOD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"If Hosea stressed true love as a characteristic feature of the divine dealings with man, it fell to Amos to emphasize divine righteousness, which for him comprised the most important moral attribute of the divine nature."¹⁰ It is this truth which distin-

guished the Living God from the gods of all other nations.

Righteousness was God's holiness manifested in right dealing with His creatures. "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Genesis 18:25 NIV). Righteousness is conformity to a right standard. It is a right conduct in relation to others. A righteous God was unable to tolerate successive violations of the moral law, and could only meet such behaviour with stern reprisals.¹¹

Judges were active in the land, but their judgments were devoid of righteousness. Amos was shocked not only by acts of injustice on the part of scoundrels but also by the perversion of justice on the part of the notables.¹² When warped and garbled, justice yields strife and distrust.

Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness (Amos 6:12 NIV).

You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground (Amos 5:7 NIV).

When God chastised and judged His people, it is justly manifested. Justice was more than an idea or a norm. Justice was a divine concern.

What obtains between God and His people is not only a covenant of mutual obligations, but also a relationship of mutual concern. The message of God is not an impersonal accusation, but the utterance of a Redeemer who is pained by the misdeeds, the thanklessness of those whom He has redeemed. His words are plantice and disconsolate.¹³

The God of Amos not only dealt righteously, but He required righteousness. Israel failed to comprehend the work of "their" God in the midst of them.

I brought you up out of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the desert to give you the land of the Amorites. I also raised up prophets from among your sons and Nazirites from among your young men. Is this not true, people of Israel? declares the Lord. But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy (Amos 2:10-12 NIV).

Amos, with a great courage, exposed the sin of Israel:

- (1) They made slaves out of the poor (2:6).
- (2) They practiced shameful immoralities (2:7).
- (3) They took advantage of those unable to pay debts (2:8).
- (4) They violated sacred vows (2:12).
- (5) They sought to shut the mouths of the prophets (2:12).
- (6) They turned a deaf ear to God's pleas (3:1-10).
- (7) They committed robbery in high places (3:10).
- (8) They oppressed the poor (4:1).
- (9) They insulted God with their hypocrisies (4:4, 5).
- (10) They were hardhearted (4:6-11).
- (11) They took bribes (5:12).
- (12) They were idolaters (5:26).
- (13) They were selfish (6:4-6).
- (14) They were proud (6:13).
- (15) They persecuted God's servants (7:10-13).

(16) They were crooked in business (8:5, 6). ¹⁴

Two sorts of "transgression" dominated: injustice to one another, and worship of idols. If the Israelites continued to behave in this way, then they could not expect to receive the great blessings which God had promised in His Covenant with them (Exodus 34). Amos saw that the little kingdom of Israel was in no condition to resist attack by Assyria, and would be destroyed. Yet he pleaded for a change of heart. He had hopes, that at least a few people would be saved (5:15, 9:11-15).

Somehow their relationship with God was corrupted. They sinned and had to be punished for it. Either graciously or not, God had to impart righteousness to (or justify) them. They had to learn to "trust God who justifies, His faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5). God's Divine nature was the basis for His dealings with them, or in fact with anybody.

The God of Amos was a God of righteousness and holiness, and insulting such righteousness and holiness would result in a stern expression of justice.

FOOTNOTES

¹Homer Hailey, A Commentary on the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 86.

²J. A. Motyer, The Day of the Lion (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), p. 40.

³Hans Walter Wolff, Joel and Amos (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 101.

⁴Wolff, op. cit., p. 97.

⁵George A. Buttrick, ed., The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VI (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 789.

⁶Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (Great Britain: SPCK, 1960), p. 23.

⁷Roland K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 899.

⁸John Marsh, Amos and Micah (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959), p. 29.

⁹Buttrick, op. cit., p. 768.

¹⁰Harrison, op. cit., p. 895.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Abraham Heschel, The Prophets - An Introduction (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), p. 202.

¹³Heschel, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁴Claude A. Ries, The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 614.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICS OF JUSTICE

NO SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

The authority of God knows no social boundaries. The highest and the lowest, the richest and the poorest, are both subject to it and protected by it. So the prophet rebuked and threatened kings as Elijah did Ahab, and Amos did Jeroboam (I Kings 21:19; Amos 7:10).

The appeal of the poor must never be refused, when he wants to borrow. Every seventh year was the year of release, when debts were cancelled, and, when such a year drew near, the temptation was to refuse to lend, lest the debt be never paid. "Rather be open-handed and freely lend to your brother, to the needy, and to the poor, in the land" (Deuteronomy 15:7-11). The man on the lowest rank of the social and economic scale is under the protection and authority of God (Deuteronomy 24:14-15). If an Israelite is reduced to such a state of poverty, that he has to sell himself as a slave, after six year's service, in the seventh year he is to be set free, and he is not to be sent away empty-handed (Deuteronomy 15:12-15). In particular the rights of the stranger, the foreigner who has come to stay in a Jewish community, the sojourner have

to be carefully guarded. The entire book of Deuteronomy is full of such rules and regulations. As Leviticus puts it: "You shall have one law for the sojourner and for the native" (Leviticus 24:22).

It is morally wrong to exploit the poor and morally right to help the poor. Whether their need was food, clothes, or shelter, the Israelite was morally obliged to help fill it. Centuries later, Jesus said, what one does to the poor he is doing to Jesus Christ. "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was rich and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:40, 35-36).

The principle of social responsibility was that there was an obligation to help others who cannot help themselves. Moses commanded to defend the oppressed and enslaved (Deuteronomy 23:16). God was against economical slavery as well as social slavery. The justice of God stretches from the king's palace to the dry-labourer's house, from the prince, to the slave. The God of Amos demanded a high degree of social consciousness and social justice, which former chapters have already illustrated.

Consequently, all nations had to meet His standard of right-

eousness. Each nation that failed to live up to that standard stood condemned, not by its own gods, but by the Living God.

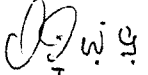
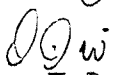
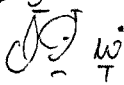
On one side, Amos stressed Israel's remarkable position in history (3:2), but on the other side, he condemned them for their religious, social practices and rejection of God.¹

The prophecy of Amos has been rightly called "a cry for justice." The tongue of Amos "was like a whip to the oppression and honey to the oppressed."² The one who had a righteous cause was condemned by the judge for the sake of the bribe.³ The sin of despising the poor is mentioned several times in this prophetic book: 2:6-7, 4:1, 5:11, and 8:6.

God's condemnation was and is on those who hate reproof, who abhor the truth, who trample upon the poor and are guilty of extortion. They will never live in their splended houses, and they will never drink the wine from their lush vineyards.

God demanded social justice. If religion was not expressed in justice, it was not religion at all.

COLLAPSE OF JUSTICE

When discussing "justice" it is necessary to understand the meaning. Amos used  as the word for "justice." This noun is derived from , meaning "to judge, deliver, rule."⁴ The primary sense of  is to exercise the processes of govern-

ment.⁵ The ancients did not always divide the functions of government as modern governments do, between legislative, executive and judicial functions. Therefore, the interpreter must seek more specialized words to translate a word of such broad meaning in the modern world sense.

Frequently, *Qw* refers to the activity of a third party who sits over two parties at odds with one another (Genesis 16:5).⁶ Usually, the third party was the elder of the family. The centering of law, rulership, government in a man was deeply ingrained.

The administration of justice in all early eastern nations, as among Arabs of the desert to this day, rests with the patriarchal seniors... Such... would have the required leasure, would be able to make their decisions respected, and though the wider intercourse of superior station would decide with fuller experience and riper reflection.⁷

Since the noun *Qw* is derived from such a verb, it also refersto all functions of government. Yet, this noun has two main senses, the first deals with the act of sitting as a judge, learning a case, and rendering a proper verdict (Ecclesiastes 12:14). The second meaning refers to the "rights" belonging to someone (Exodus 23:6).⁸

The pulsebeat of Ancient Near East life could be felt at the city gate.

Basically, *Qw* represented a "structure closing and enclosing a large opening through a wall, or a barrier through which

people and things pass to an enclosed area." ⁹ The gate was the place where local courts convened (Deuteronomy 25:7). Not only great affairs of state, but even the complaints of its least citizen were all heard at the city gate. In the days of Amos, too, the city gate was the seat of justice (5:12, 12, 15). But what kind of justice? There was a complete collapse of the judicial administration: "Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness" (6:12 NIV). The folly of expecting real prosperity while committing acts of injustice, was forcibly represented by comparing it to the absurdity of attempting to run horses upon a rock, or to plough it with oxen. ¹⁰ "Only a lunatic would imagine either possible." ¹¹ Such a kingdom could not continue longer. The effect of righteousness, or justice should have been something good and helpful. Instead, they were bitter and injurious.

The preservation of justice presupposes, in principle, the will and intention of distinguishing between good and evil. ¹² This was a "justice" for Amos. The expression of His justice in the life of the community was the judgment, and judgment must proceed from justice. ¹³

Justice between man and man is one of the divine foundations of society. ¹⁴ It was deliberately dishonored and destroyed by the

citizens of Israel. That was their way of playing the politics of justice.

OBSERVATIONS

It was stated about the difficulty to formulate a precise definition of "political philosophy." It describes all the important parts of life and has intimate connections with the social sciences and with ethics. The nation of Israel had and knew their "political philosophy" but it did not work.

For Israel, the chosen one (3:2), the authority of God should be supreme in the political sphere. Yet, the people of Israel failed to live according to their "politics." Time after time the prophets played the part of politicians, especially in regard to the foreign policy of the nation. "Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics." ¹⁵ The prophets would have agreed. Nothing can happen without the processes of politics and government. So Amos fortold the death of Jeroboam and the exile of the Northern Kingdom (7:10, 11). Isaiah guided the foreign policy of Hezekiah in relation to Assyria and Babylon (Isaiah 37:39; II Kings 9:20-34, 20:12-19). Jeremiah left no doubt about the triumph of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon and of what the nation's attitude to the situation ought to be (Jeremiah 32-34).

Any nation which lived in Palestine was forced into politics.

The trouble was that Palestine lay between two great empires, north (Assyria or Babylon) and south (Egypt). Whenever those two great empires came clash or competition, Palestine was necessarily involved. The politicians of Palestine in their foreign policy, had continually to make the political gamble of living up with the north or the south. Always the prophets entered the debate, and always their message was that the duty of the nation was not to calculate the profit or the prudence of this or that alliance but to do and to accept the will of God. The prophets did not agree as to whether or not religion and politics were connected, they assumed it. It was the basic fact on which their message was built. He who is Lord of the individual heart is Lord of the nations too. His will should be sought and His authority accepted in the life of nations as well as in the life of men. The political action should be the concrete expression of the will of God.

The nation of Israel had a clear sense of politics for their life and their existence. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). God gave them land to live and He told them: "Be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Deuteronomy 6:12). God's aim was to lead the Israelites into a fuller blessing. God and all

that surrounded Him, was their "political philosophy." They were taught about His commandments, yet they did not practice them. Amos pictured that every aspect of their behavior and their life failed the standard of their politics.

Father, God elected Israel, and thus increased her responsibility. "You only have I known; and because you did not take the moral advantage of my intercourse, because you felt it only a privilege and pride, pardon for the past security for the future, therefore doom the more inexorable awaits you." ¹⁶

The politics of God evoked every aspect of social life, but here the Israelites deliberately worked their own politics. Their social behavior was more horrible than could be comprehended.

The justice of God was supposed to be creative. The justice which even sought new and deeper levels of mutual relatedness, not simply the preservation of those familiar bonds which already existed. God's justice should bring vindication to the poor, the outcasts, and the oppressed. The authority of God demanded social justice. Because their religion was not expressed in justice, it was not religion at all.

The authority of God and His love (politics of Israel) is not something remote and distant. It is something by which the most ordinary action of the most ordinary life should be dominated and directed.

The needs of the world are much deeper than political freedom and security, much deeper than social justice and economic development, much deeper than democracy and progress... The deeper needs of the world belong to the sphere of the mind, the heart and the spirit, a sphere to be penetrated with the light and grace of Jesus Christ.¹⁷

When the inner being of man becomes corrected (finds the right "political" therapy), he will have a great impact on the surrounding world. The political complexity of today's world will be changed and the relations between people would go much smoother.

Perhaps there are only two so-called "political philosophies": to love God or to hate God. The attitude of people is evidenced by their obedience or disobedience. When the Lord Jesus Christ gave His commission to Peter, He asked only one question, "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?" (John 21:16). In the light of Israel's failure, so vividly presented by the prophet Amos, comes the question: "What (whom) do you choose as a standard of your "political philosophy?"

FOOTNOTES

¹Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 194.

²Oscar F. Reed and others, Beacon Bible Commentary, Vol. V The Minor Prophets (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1966), p. 108.

³Charles L. Feinberg, The Minor Prophets (Chicago: Moody Press, 1948), p. 91.

⁴Merrill F. Unger and William White Jr., eds., Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), p. 204.

⁵R. Laird Harris and others, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 947.

⁶Unger, op. cit., p. 204.

⁷Harris, op. cit., p. 947.

⁸Unger, op. cit., p. 205.

⁹Unger, op. cit., p. 146.

¹⁰Ebenezer Henderson, The Twelve Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 167.

¹¹Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (Great Britain: SPCK, 1960), p. 214.

¹²Claus Schedl, History of the Old Testament - The Age of the Prophets, Vol. IV (New York: Alba House, 1972), p. 154.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Homer Hailey, A Commentary on the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 87.

¹⁵William Barclay, By What Authority? (Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), p. 37.

¹⁶Kyle M. Yates, Preaching From the Prophets (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1942), p. 48.

¹⁷Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (Great Britain: SPCK, 1960), p. I.

CHAPTER V

NOTES ON CHAPTER 7

THE VISIONS AND GOD

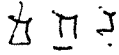
The words of the justice God had to come to realization. The Israelites played wrong politics, that brought a disaster upon them. Amos was "caused to see" the locust plague.¹ While he observed the plague, he fell into the vision state, in which he was under the Divine influence. It was not just an inner feeling on the prophet's part, but it was a revelation from God by His Spirit.² He was, with his own physical eyes, a parable of what was in store for the nation of Israel.

Locusts were a sort of grasshopper. They migrated in large swarms and destroyed and devoured all vegetation as they went.³ The insects multiplied in the earlier part of the year, so they were just ready to swarm over the fields when the second crop was ready to be harvested. Perhaps, the first crop had to be paid to the king as a tax.⁴ The custom was for farmers to keep the second crop for themselves, but in this case every family would suffer hunger. Amos saw this, not as an economic misfortune due to an accident of nature, but as a visitation by God. They could no more expect to survive the judgment (justice) of God than they could

expect the crop to survive the locusts.

The locusts had finished the destruction of the grass, the vegetation of the land, when the prophet interceded for his people. There was no way that a "small Jacob" could survive. Amos pleaded for the forgiveness of the people, and the Lord answered and the destruction was averted for the time. Everything happened in God's sovereign will and purpose. To pray for the people was one of the functions of the prophets (Genesis 20:7; Exodus 32:11ff; Numbers 14:13ff; I Samuel 7:8; Jeremiah 14:8-9 etc.).⁵ Amos had a concern for those to whom he preached. He recognized that he had no right to preach to people unless he had prayed for them. Amos identified himself with the people and their poverty.

Then Amos had a second vision and there were similar results. God again had the forces of nature in His hands. The basis of the vision was drought, which dried up the wells and a natural springs for a time (4:7-8). "God sent the divine fire, the instrument of His wrath."⁶

Once again, after the petition of the prophet, God felt sorry  for the judgment decreed and willed a change. The power of the intercessory prayers of the righteous was clearly demonstrated.

Later, Amos perhaps was still in Bethel, saw a good deal of new building going on. It was a manifest sign of Israel's prosper-

ity, and evidence of the security that was generally felt. It is tempting to imagine that it was at some new buildings for the nobel men or royal temple at Bethel that Amos saw the wall being measured against a plumbline.

Perhaps, the ears of king Jeroboam were not so deaf to the words of Amos. Possibly they found an echo deep in his heart. At all events he feverishly set about strengthening the defences of the royal city of Samaria, which were in any case sufficiently forbidding.

J. W. Crowfoot, the English archaeologist, found what Jeroboam in his wisdom and foresight had achieved. Samaria had been surrounded with a double wall and the existing walls which were already massive had been further strengthened. In the northern section of the acropolis, where Samaria must have been most vulnerable, Crowfoot exposed a titanesque bastion. He measured it and was certain he must have made a mistake. He measured it carefully once more. No doubt about it, the wall - solid stone through and through - was 30 feet thick.⁷

In his vision, Amos saw a very ordinary thing, a common lead used by builders. A plumb-line is simply a piece of string with a weight fixed at the bottom. By holding it beside a wall the builder could see if the wall was straight, since a plumb-line always hangs vertically, straight up and down.

The Lord was standing upon a wall, "made by a plumb-line," rather ready for a plumb-line, in need of a plumb-line.⁸ The wall was subjected to a plumb-line test.⁹ God was about to test Israel by the standard used to build the wall (the very structure of the

nation itself). The test again would fall just as a crooked wall falls. God was doing this, not because He needed proof that the wall was crooked, but in order to convince the prophet that it was crooked and needed to be demolished. "I will spare them no longer," with the idea that God will no more forgive them.¹⁰

In a sense, the ministry of Amos was a plumb-line with which God measured and tested His people. Yet, He saw the demoralization of the women (4:1-3), the idle rich (6:4-7), the judges (5:10-13), the merchants (8:4-7) and, above all, the priests (7:10-17). There was no sincere repentance on their part.

In the first two visions, Amos had interceded for Israel, but not this time. Amos did not pray for them. Perhaps, it was so because of the testing, which "is an inseparable part of the experience of the people of God - testing designed to demonstrate the reality or the unreality of their profession."¹¹ They were ripe for judgment and for the destruction. The high places of Isaac, their sanctuaries devoted to the calf worship and other forms of idolatry, will be destroyed. They shall be desolated, laid waste.

God will rise up also against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. The dynasty of Jeroboam was rejected by God. This politically able king, named after the founding king of the schismatic northern kingdom, was recorded as: "He did what was evil in the

sight of the Lord, he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin" (II Kings 14:24). The family basically, sinned disobeying to the law of the Lord. Jeroboam II received the kingdom upon moral conditions: "If you will hearken to all that I command you and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commands... I will be with you, and will build you a sure house... (I Kings 11:38).

Somehow the actions of Jeroboam II did not go far from the characteristics given to his ancestors. Jeroboam I did not walk in the ways of God. He preferred to build the shrines at Bethel and Dan, and to set up the golden calves. He rejected the law of God and rejected or "proceeded to corrupt the grace of the Lord also." ¹² Both the false worship and the ungodly monarchy in Israel will be swept away.

THE REACTION

Many people regarded Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., as a modern prophet as he called for more just relationships between people of different races. He warned of violence that might come if a nonviolent way of reconciliation were not followed. To what extent have people heeded his words, or inquired them?

The Polish Pope, John Paul II, preaches a message of "peace,"

and freedom for the individuals in every part of the world. Often he is called a "charismatic reformer" of the Catholic denomination. Because he takes a firm stand for justice, he almost lost his own life.

Amos was not afraid to stand with God's message before the priest Amaziah and the king Jeroboam. No prophet had ever stood at the king's sanctuary and declared the judgment of God as forthrightly as had this man from Judah. Yet, Amos undoubtedly aware of the possible consequences, did not seem to show the slightest hesitancy. Amos declared the death to those who had permitted, even encouraged, the injustices which were everywhere in the land. Their evil would bring captivity to the whole nation. These were hard words and unwelcome words.¹³

Immediately after hearing Amos' prophecy, Amaziah, the high priest at the sanctuary of the golden calf at Bethel,¹⁴ sent a delegation to Jeroboam and charged Amos with stirring up a conspiracy against the king in the very heart of his land. It is obvious, that Amaziah worked closely with the king, and took part even in political affairs.

Amos became a trouble-maker. He was accused of conspiring against the king and against the nation. He supposedly was leading an illegal plot. Perhaps Israel would take the words of the prophet seriously. There might be "revolution," an uprising demanding

justice and righteousness, which could lead to a new social and religious awakening.

Perhaps the words were presented correctly. There was no escape, and no hope to survive. It was better to get rid of this "unkind" man. The appearance of a Judean prophet uttering menaces of invasion and destruction was a natural focus for political suspicion.¹⁵

Though Amaziah appears to have been a good politician, he mentioned not his own interest in the deportation of Amos, but only his patriotic concern for the welfare of the nation: "The land cannot bear all his words" (7:10). Amaziah, a blind leader of the blind!

The answer was very harsh. Amos was commanded to go back to Judah and earn his living there. Amaziah stood so close to the king that he was more concerned about the duty which he thought Amos owed to Jeroboam, than about the duty which the whole people of Israel owed to God.

Amos was not the only one to be tested by confrontations of authority. Was it not said to the apostles: "We strictly charged you not to teach in His name, yet have you Jerusalem with your teaching (Acts 5:28)? How splendid the reply: "We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)!"

THE MAN OF GOD

The greatest challenge of his life, Amos faced by stating his credentials. He gave a clear account of his calling by God. Amos pointed out that there was no question of conspiracy. He was working entirely on his own, and it was not the business for the sake of money. He was not a prophet by training nor a "graduating pupil of the seminary." Amos had not come to Bethel as the agent of any other person.¹⁷ He was not a prophet of the king that had chosen this profession for selfish reasons (Jeremiah 23:9-32; Micah 2:11; 3:5, 11).¹⁸

His occupation had been that of a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, which was studied in the introductory chapter. Amos had become a prophet only because he felt the call of God. The priest was saying, "go, flee," but God has said, "go, prophesy." The priest might be speaking with the authority of the king, but Amos spoke with the authority of God. It was God who called Amos. It was God who had commissioned Amos to prophesy. The message was not of his own choosing or his own wisdom.

In that frame of reference, Amos returned to his "old theme," as unpopular and unwelcome as it had been, and passed on with his proclamation of judgment (7:17). All the things that Amaziah held precious and holy would be destroyed. His wife was degraded and his children killed. The land which he sought to defend from the

ill-effects of Amos' ministry would eventually be occupied and carried up among the enemy. Finally Amaziah himself would die in exile. He heard the word of the Lord but did not listen, accept and obey. The Lord of the plumb-line drew near and measured two men: Amaziah and Amos. One was taken and one was left, because one bowed before the word and the other did not. The God of Amos induces one to side with Him who has said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

FOOTNOTES

¹Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (Great Britain: SPCK, 1960), p. 218.

²Homer Hailey, A Commentary on the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 116.

³Cripps, op. cit., p. 219.

⁴Ebenezer Henderson, The Twelve Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 169.

⁵Dr. Theo Laetsch, Bible Commentary - The Minor Prophets (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 175.

⁶James L. Mays, Amos - A Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 131.

⁷Werner Keller, The Bible as History (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1965), p. 257.

⁸Laetsch, op. cit., p. 177.

⁹J. A. Motyer, The Day of the Lion (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974), p. 161.

¹⁰Rev. E. B. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, Vol. I (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), p. 319.

¹¹Motyer, op. cit., p. 160.

¹²Motyer, op. cit., p. 166.

¹³D. David Garland, Amos - A Study Guide (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 81.

¹⁴C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. X, Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 311.

¹⁵John Marsh, Amos and Micah (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959), p. 64.

¹⁶Hans Walter Wolff, Joel and Amos (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 311.

¹⁷Bernard Thorogood, A Guide to the Book of Amos (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971), p. 84.

¹⁸Dr. Theo Laetsch, Bible Commentary - The Minor Prophets (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 178.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Theology is the science of God and the revelation between God and the universe, including creation, providence, and redemption. Revealed theology is built upon the revelation which God has given by divine inspiration concerning Himself and His works. Man's duty is to ascertain just what the meaning is of that which has been revealed. "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3, NAS).

Politics represent the art or science of government. Political philosophy has a great task in finding the ultimate justification for the existence of any form of government. The book of Amos emphasizes anew the principles that had long been announced to the people: "The wicked will return to the Sheol, even all the nations who forget God" (Psalms 9:17, NAS). "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34, NAS). The prophecy of Amos points out clearly that "It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established on righteousness" (Proverbs 16:12, NAS). The nation of Israel has reached the point where there is a deep-rooted need for the reminder of two fundamentals: 1) the true nature and the character of God; and 2) the relation between God and the nations, and the proper basis

of his relation to Israel. The politics of Amos' theology supply this need!

Amos presents a world view of God and the nations. He never refers to ^{אלהים} as "The God of Israel," a term familiar to them. The whole message centers in the common prophetic conviction that God is the sole and righteous Governor of the world, judging the people righteously. When they rebel, He is dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

The essential point of this message proclaimed to Israel: The Book of Amos makes it clear that God really cares for all nations with a genuine intimate love. He leads other people as truly as He is leading Israel. He deals with each nation according to its own righteousness and punishes its sin impartially. Israel is to be judged by the same principles of common morality which are binding upon the surrounding nations. He is faithful with Israel, if they walk with Him. But, simply, their religious conditions were outwardly and they did not know God. That is why God is punishing and judging them.

A similar situation is found today in the country of Poland. The politics of the world and their own righteousness are destroying that nation. They are in the one thousand seventeenth year of so-called Christianity, but very far from daily walking with the Living God. Rituals and traditions cannot help, if man's heart is empty.

The politics of Amos' day are almost identical to the present one. Being able to understand their situation is highly inspiring and beneficial to the author who can properly find the answer to today's similar situation in Poland. Often the truly righteous believer is the one who is oppressed and has to sacrifice every aspect of his life. The people prefer to keep on doing unjust deeds rather than to obey the Word of God.

The author understands Christian practice as not by any means to be restricted to the private or non-political sphere, nor to purely ecclesiastical affairs. Under no circumstances can it disregard society and the world. The classical works of the Reformation period - Melanchthon's Loci communes and Calvin's Institutio - still treat dogmatics and ethics in one. Christian faith and Christian action cannot be separated either in the individual or in the social sphere (James). Man is not saved by deeds, he is saved for deeds.

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