

THE BOOK OF AMOS

Part One: Introduction

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS book sprang from the need of providing a new and up-to-date introduction for the Book of Amos as a basis for the studies of the Probationer Ministers of the Methodist Church. The new developments of the study of the prophets have not found their way into the English literature on the subject to the extent to which they are found in the German books of the last ten to fifteen years. But, as the material developed, it seemed advisable to extend the original idea from that of an introduction with special notes added, into something in the nature of a commentary which should be on modern lines, divided into the various sections of which modern scholarship has realized the book to be composed.

The student is recommended to study previous writings on the work of the Prophet Amos, because out of many mouths the truth is to be established. The books in English chiefly to be recommended are: S. R. Driver, *Joel and Amos* (Camb. Bible, 1897, with its 1915 revision by H. C. O. Lanchester); W. R. Harper, *Amos and Hosea* (ICC, 1905); E. A. Edgehill, *Amos* (*Westminster Commentaries*, 1913); T. H. Robinson, *The Book of Amos* (in National Adult School series of translations into colloquial speech, 1921), and, for students whose knowledge of Hebrew is limited, *The Book of Amos* (Hebrew Text), 1923; R. S. Cripps, *The Book of Amos* (1929). We recommend particularly the last three books, those by T. H. Robinson and R. S. Cripps, the one author, for the modern approach represented in the format of the books, and the other, for the material embodied in the notes. Further, no student

of any of the Minor Prophets can afford to neglect Sir G. A. Smith's 'The Book of the Twelve Prophets' (*The Expositor's Bible*), vol. I. For students who read German there is a wealth of commentaries, by Wellhausen, Duhm, Nowack, Marti, Meinhold, Gressmann, Hans Schmidt, Kohler, Sellin, Weiser, and in French, van Hoonacker.

It has been found impossible to publish the whole of this book in time for the specific purpose for which it was written—namely, for the guidance of Methodist Probationer Ministers in their studies for the winter of 1945-6. *Part One: Introduction*, has therefore been issued separately. *Part Two: Translation and Notes*, will follow as soon as possible. In this second part there will be found detailed discussions of all the passages whose authenticity as genuine Amos oracles has been questioned.

N. H. S.

November, 1945

I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE history of the Near East during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. is, in the main, the story of the effect on Syrian Damascus and Israel of three Assyrian drives to break through to the Mediterranean sea-coast. Long years before, toward the end of the twelfth century, Tiglath-pileser I, the first of the great Assyrian war-lords, had reached the Gulf of Issus, sailed on the Western Sea, and hunted wild oxen in the foothills of the Lebanon. Since his day, for two hundred and fifty years, Assyria had been either too weak or engaged elsewhere, for it is not until the middle of the ninth century that we hear of any renewed Assyrian interest in the west.

The first of these three renewed Assyrian thrusts to the west was by Shalmaneser III (860-23). He reached Karkar, which is not far from Hamath on the Orontes, the northern limit of David's conquests and formerly the ancient southern capital of the Hittites. There he was met by a Syrian confederacy of some four thousand chariots, two thousand cavalry, and sixty thousand infantry. Ben-hadad of Damascus was the leader, but Ahab of Israel contributed half the chariots and ten thousand of the infantry. Shalmaneser claimed a sweeping victory, but although the allies lost heavily, they seem to have prevented, for the time at least, any further Assyrian inroads toward the west. According to his annals, Shalmaneser continued his attempts to dominate the west for another decade, until in 841 he defeated Hazael of Damascus on the slopes of Mount

Hermon, besieged Damascus itself, and received tribute from the kings of the west, including Jehu of Israel. The Assyrian domination soon passed, since for the last eighteen years of his reign Shalmaneser appears to have had no further interest in the west.

The second drive to the west was by Adad-nirari III (805-782), Shalmaneser's grandson. He subdued Damascus in 803. He claimed to have reached the Western Sea, and to have received tribute from all the kings of Syria and Palestine, but, though his hand was very heavy on Damascus, there is no evidence that his rule was effective any farther west.

Following the death of Adad-nirari III, there was a period of Assyrian weakness, due chiefly to the incursions of the Armenians under Argistis (780-60) and his successor, but the Assyrian thrusts to the west were renewed by the usurper Tiglath-pileser III (745-27). Once again Assyria had a strong and warlike king. He defeated the Armenians in the first year of his reign, reconquered the territories which had been lost to the Armenians, and conducted various victorious campaigns south and east and north, until at last in 738 he was free to turn to the west. In that year Menahem of Israel paid tribute to his Assyrian overlord. By 732 Tiglath-pileser had made an end of the Syrian kingdom of Damascus, and had replaced Pekah of Israel with his own nominee, Hoshea. When the Assyrian king died in 727, Hoshea rebelled, encouraged by the promises of Egypt. But Egypt fulfilled her customary role of allowing her performance to lag far behind her promises, with the result that the new king, Shalmaneser V, soon made an end of Hoshea, and besieged Samaria the capital, which fell in 721 to Shalmaneser's successor, Sargon, after a three-years' siege. Already in 738 Tiglath-pileser had shorn away the northern

provinces of Israel, made large deportations of the inhabitants, and created an Assyrian province there. Now the same procedure was followed with regard to the rest of the kingdom, and we hear no more of Israel as a political entity.

The history of the relations of the southern kingdom of Judah with Assyria is very different. Judah's first contact with Assyria did not take place until 734 B.C., when Ahaz of Judah appealed to Tiglath-pileser III against Pekah of Israel and Rezon of Damascus, who were trying to bully him into joining them in their proposed rebellion against Assyria. It was this appeal which precipitated the crisis, and led to Tiglath-pileser's devastating attack on the two kingdoms. From this time down to the death of Asshur-bani-pal and the end of the Assyrian power in 626 B.C., Judah was dutifully submissive to her overlord, except for Hezekiah's famous adventure in 701, when he was miraculously delivered from the armies of Sennacherib (705-680).

Into this background of Assyrian endeavours to control all the lands between Nineveh and the sea, we must weave the strifes and rivalries of the two kingdoms of Damascus and Israel. Damascus, because of the fertility of its oasis and its position dominating the trade routes, has always been the prize and jewel of the Near East, as it is to this day. David's prosperity depended mostly upon his control of Damascus and the trade routes. Solomon's financial difficulties began from the time when, early in his reign, he lost control of that city. From that time, Damascus, once more independent, grew in wealth and strength, until the kings of Israel more than once found themselves in serious difficulties because of the inroads of their powerful neighbour. During the time of Baasha of

Israel (912-888) and the troublous years that followed till Omri (886-74) was established on the throne, Damascus steadily gained in strength often at the expense of Israel. Ahab (874-52) had the greatest difficulty in maintaining any sort of independence, until Ben-hadad's arrogant carelessness enabled the Israelite king to inflict a crushing defeat on his enemy. This gave Israel a breathing space, especially since the Assyrian menace under Shalmaneser III warned these smaller kingdoms that their only hope of survival lay in making common cause against the invader. But after the death of Ahab, the strength of Damascus once more asserted itself, whilst the prophetic revolution which set Jehu on Israel's throne and Hazael on Damascus' throne, involved an isolationist policy which rendered the smaller states in turn easy prey for the conqueror.

As we have seen, Shalmaneser took little interest in the west after 841 B.C., with the result that Damascus continued to grow stronger and stronger, so that by the time of Jehoahaz of Israel (821-04) the Syrian king of Damascus was dominant throughout Palestine. The first Assyrian thrust to the west, therefore, brought little relief to Israel, but the second thrust under Adad-nirari III had a very different result. His conquest of Damascus in 803 so reduced that country that she was never afterwards any serious menace to Israel. Succeeding years marked a period of great prosperity for the northern kingdom, first under Jehoash (804-788) and then during the long reign of Jeroboam II (788-47). Judah also shared in the prosperity which this freedom from Syrian domination provided, for Judah also was fortunate to have a king who reigned for many years—namely, Uzziah—who reigned for at least forty-two years (the fifty-two

years of 2 Kings xv. 2 cannot be right, even allowing the twelve or thirteen years of Jotham's regency).

This time of great prosperity was the period of Amos's activity as a prophet. The boundaries of Israel extended from Hamath in the north to the Dead Sea. It is probable that the whole of Transjordania fell into Jeroboam's hands. Never were times like these, but within twenty-six years after Jeroboam's death, four kings of Israel had been assassinated, Hoshea the last deposed and imprisoned, and Israel had ceased to be a nation. The prosperity of Jeroboam's time was immediately succeeded by civil wars, so that a renewed Assyria easily conquered and destroyed the whole.

II. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL

As we have seen, the defeat of Damascus by Adad-nirari III in 803 left her so weak that Jehoash (804-788) and his son Jeroboam II were able to secure for Israel an unwonted supremacy in Northern Palestine and Syria. Even if the inclusion of Hamath and Damascus in the list of their conquests is an exaggeration (2 Kings xiv. 25), their conquests to the North of Galilee and in Transjordania gave them control of all the trade routes. Not only could they dominate the route west from Damascus to the ports of Phoenicia and the caravan route east of Jordan (later the famous pilgrim route to Mecca), but they could exercise complete control over the more frequented, because safer, route across Jordan below the Sea of Galilee through Samaria and on to the coastal plain to Egypt. They could take pains to keep the routes safe from robbers and brigands, and themselves could levy tolls

in return, as doubtless David and Solomon had done in the former days of prosperity.

And so Samaria, Israel's capital city, became a meeting place of merchants who travelled between Mesopotamia and Egypt. She became an emporium for goods of every type, excelling most other centres in both quantity and quality. During the former period of prosperity, short-lived though it had been, Ahab had been a great builder with his ivory house (1 Kings xxii. 39 and probably also Psalm xlv. 8) and his cities. Now once again increased commercial prosperity had its counterpart in a growing luxury in buildings. Amos (iii. 15) refers to the 'winter house with the summer house' and to 'houses of ivory and houses of ebony (so read)'. There are many palaces in Samaria (iii. 10), belonging not only to the king himself, but to the new merchant princes who have grown rich in trade. Hewn stone replaced the old bricks, and cedar of Lebanon the common fig-sycamore wood (Isaiah ix. 10).

Within these rich and splendid houses could be found every type of luxury, ivory couches with silken cushions (Amos vi. 4, iii. 12), and great feasts of veal and lamb and wine (vi. 4-6). Isaiah of Jerusalem also refers to the careless ease and luxury of these times, both in Samaria (xxviii. 1-9) and in Jerusalem also (iii. 16-24). The merchants are so eager to increase their profits by all means, both fair and foul, that they can scarce wait for the Sabbaths and the New-months to pass (Amos viii. 5), whilst their wives, like fat, sleek cows of Bashan, urge them on to provide yet more luxuries (iv. 1). All this desire for wealth and luxurious living led to increasing oppression of the poor by the new-rich merchant classes. Apart from false measures and weights and refuse wheat sold for good wheat (viii. 5),

there was no justice for the poor man anywhere. The wealthy merchants and money-lenders took men's very clothes as pledges for debt, and used them as coverings on which to lounge for the bacchanalian religious feasts (ii. 8). The rich man invariably secured his verdict in the courts, though it were but for a piece of silver or a pair of sandals (ii. 6, viii. 6).

More serious even than this was the extinction of the independent small-holder, the peasant proprietor, who had his own vine and fig-tree, and with industry had for generations eked out an independent though sometimes precarious livelihood. But now, the increased luxury of the times and the rising cost of living drove him into debt. The prophets had fought his battle during a former time of trade prosperity with Naboth as the test case (1 Kings xxi), and once more, under similar circumstances, the same injustices arose. The small plots of land were absorbed into the large estates. The wealthy landowners and the newly rich capitalists foreclosed the mortgages, and swallowed up farms and men, either keeping the husbandman on his plot as tenant or selling up him and his family as slaves (Amos v. 11; 2 Kings iv. 1-7). In any case, the alternatives were slavery or starvation, and inevitably the old independence was gone. (For an excellent description of these times, see Oesterley and Robinson, *History of Israel*, vol. i, pp. 361-71). We have, therefore, a country with great scarcity and poverty in the midst of plenty, a state of society in which the rich grow steadily richer and more luxurious in their tastes, whilst the poor become even poorer until they lack even the necessities of life. The country was ripe for civil strife, rotten at the core, so ripe for civil strife that at the death of Jeroboam we have three kings in one year, two of them murdered and the third establishing himself

and his son for twelve years, so rotten at the core that within ten years the Israelite king Menahem lost a large part of his kingdom and found himself the humble servant of his Assyrian overlord. Amos was right in his forecasts of sudden doom and black disaster. Israel was a basket of summer fruit (*qayits*), ripe for the eating, and her end (*qeyts*) was come (viii, 2).

III. THE BOOK: ITS PLACE IN THE CANON

THE Hebrew Bible consists of three separate divisions, Law, Prophets, and Writings. In all modern printed Bibles these divisions are as distinct as the two divisions of the Christian Bible—namely, the Old and the New Testaments. Some printed Hebrew Bibles insert the Five Rolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) immediately after the Pentateuch, and there are also editions of the Law and the Haphtharoth (Readings from the Prophets which follow the Readings from the Law in the synagogues), but apart from these two instances, the three divisions are everywhere maintained. They demonstrate the three stages by which the Hebrew Scriptures grew—that is, the various stages by which the various component books, already written, came to be regarded as sacred and authoritative.

The first stage of development was the acceptance of the 'five-fifths of the Law' as Scripture. The Pentateuch was accepted as sacred and authoritative before 350 B.C., the approximate date of the Samaritan schism. In earlier books the date of this disruption is given as 432 B.C., the date of the expulsion by Nehemiah of Eliashib's grandson (Nehemiah xiii. 28). This is on the assumption that Ezra was in Jerusalem before

Nehemiah was on the scene, so that the expulsion of Eliashib's grandson was regarded as the final act of a drama which began in the year 458 B.C., the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Longimanus). It is now recognized by the majority of scholars that Ezra's work at Jerusalem began in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)—that is, in the year 397 B.C. This means that there was a whole generation between the end of Nehemiah's work and the beginning of Ezra's activity. The effect of this is to bring the *terminus ad quem* of the completed Pentateuch some thirty-five years later at the very least, and all this on the assumption that Ezra knew the Priestly Code as we have it now. But this latter can scarcely be the case, for whilst the details of Nehemiah viii are in accordance with the Priestly Code, yet there are details of the solemn covenant of Nehemiah x, which agree with Deuteronomy vii rather than with the Priestly Code.¹

The second stage of development of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture was the adoption of the 'Prophets'. This took place between about 280 B.C. and well before 180 B.C. The reason why it is necessary to fix the *terminus a quo* not earlier than 280 B.C. is that the latter part of Zechariah (ix-xiv) contains elements which must belong to the times of the rivalries of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, the two Greek dynasties which became dominant after the break-up of Alexander's empire. On the other hand, Ben Sirach's reference to 'the twelve' (Ecclesiasticus xlix. 10) makes it clear that he was thoroughly well acquainted with a well-established group of prophecies such as we have now. His date is about 180 B.C., so that we are probably correct in stating that the Book of Amos,

¹ See H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Old Testament: Its Making and Meaning*, pp. 191-3.

as one of the Twelve Prophets, was received as Scripture about the year 250 B.C.

'The Prophets', the second section of the Hebrew Bible, is composed of eight books of prophecies, usually divided in modern printed Hebrew Bibles into 'The Former Prophets' and 'The Latter Prophets'. They comprise respectively Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings for the former, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve for the latter. The order of the Latter Prophets varies, since the Hebrew tradition preserved in the Talmud (*Baba bathra* 14*b*) places Jeremiah and Ezekiel before Isaiah. This order is found also in a number of Hebrew manuscripts, those of German and French origin. The order Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel is also found, but the most common is that with which we are familiar, namely Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Whatever the changes in the order of the first three books of the Latter Prophets, however, the Book of the Twelve Prophets always comes last.

In the Greek Bible (Septuagint), the Twelve Prophets are found before the other three, and the Prophets conclude the Old Testament, except that after Jeremiah there are inserted Baruch, Lamentations, and the Epistle of Jeremiah (two of them from the Apocrypha), and after Ezekiel, thus concluding the Greek Old Testament, the books of Susanna (from the Apocrypha), Daniel, and Bel and the Dragon (from the Apocrypha). The different order of the books in the Septuagint is probably due to an attempt to place them in what was conceived to be a more accurate historical order. This accounts for the fact that in the Greek Bible, Amos comes next after Hosea, instead of third (as in the Hebrew Bible and our English Versions) with Joel in between. In the Vulgate, the Hebrew order is followed both in making the Twelve follow the other

three prophets, and in making Amos the third of the Twelve. But in the order of the Prophets themselves the order of the Septuagint is followed, so that the Prophets come at the end of the Old Testament, though they are followed by 1 and 2 Maccabees.

It will be seen that in respect of the position in the Old Testament of the various books, the order in our English Bibles follows that of the Vulgate with the excision, so far as Protestants are concerned, of the books of the Apocrypha, which were accepted as canonical by the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, though never by the Jews of Palestine. The order of the books in the Vulgate is a compromise between that in Hebrew Bibles and that of the Septuagint. This is due to the facts that the Septuagint was the Bible of the Christian Church for four hundred years, that Jerome's first two translations of the Old Testament into Latin were from the Septuagint, and that his third translation (the Vulgate) was from the Hebrew. This latter version became the Bible of the Christian Church from the time of Jerome down to the Reformation, and still is the Bible of the Roman Church, except for the Psalter, which is that of the second translation from the Greek, and is therefore much nearer to Septuagint than to the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

IV. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BOOK

THE last twenty years have seen a marked difference in the approach to the study of the construction of the books of the prophets. It had long been taken for granted that the Pentateuch is a compilation from various sources, and that, as we have it now, it is the

work of the priestly editors of post-exilic times, dating from the fourth century B.C. Scholars had also learned to regard the Former Prophets as compilations rather than as sustained narratives. It had been recognized, too, that some of the Latter Prophets were composite books, notably the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, which had been carefully analysed by such scholars as T. K. Cheyne, whilst it was common knowledge that there were at least three 'Isaiahs'. Similarly, Zechariah was recognized as being composed of two sections, one from the time of Haggai and the Restoration, and the other (ix to end) from a later period. The Book of Micah had also been realized to contain probably not more than three chapters, the first three, from the hand of the peasant of Moresheth-gath. Apart from these exceptions, the books of the prophets were regarded as coming in the main from the hands of the men whose names they bore. Each book was regarded as being a series of sustained discourses, in which it was taken for granted that every verse was 'authentic' unless it was shown to be incompatible with the historical or theological conditions of the prophet's time.

This older type of 'introduction' is to be seen at its best, so far as the Book of Amos is concerned, in the work of S. R. Driver, whose judgement was generally sound, careful, and well-balanced. His work on this book is to be found in *The Books of Joel and Amos* (Cambridge Bible for Schools, 1898), pp. 117-22, and his standard *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (9th ed., 1913), pp. 313-18. The book is regarded as falling naturally into three sections, which comprise chapters 1 and 2, 3 to 6, and 7 to 9 respectively. Driver considers each section to be 'dominated by the same fundamental thoughts, and

the whole pervaded by a unity of plan which leaves no reasonable doubt that the argument is the author's own' (*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 9th ed., p. 314). Driver regards almost the whole book as being above suspicion as the veritable product of Amos of Tekoa, arguing in every case against those scholars who would make certain paragraphs to be insertions by later hands. The paragraphs to which exception have been taken are: i. 1 and 2; i. 9, 10; i. 11, 12; ii. 4, 5; v. 13-15; v. 25; vi. 2; viii. 8b to end; and in addition the doxologies, iv. 13; v. 8 f; ix. 5 f., with various explanatory glosses of one type and another, or intrusions by later editors who wished to point another moral for other time. We agree that some of these passages belong to later times, but by no means all. They are discussed, each in their place in the series of notes in *Part Two*.

On this basis, the Book of Amos falls into three main sections: (i) chapters i and ii, which form a series of judgements on the neighbouring nations, ending with a prolonged and severe judgement upon Israel. These oracles are introduced by the formula, 'Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of . . ., yea for four I will not intervene' (EVV, '. . . For three transgressions of . . .', and RV, 'yea—for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof'). They proceed to give the reason for the refusal of God to suspend punishment, and conclude generally (i.e. in the genuine Amos oracles) with the phrase, 'saith the Lord'. (ii) Chapters iii-vi, which form a series of three discourses, each of them introduced by the phrase 'Hear this word' (iii. 1; iv. 1; v. 1). These discourses tend to be discursive, dealing with many matters, and tending to return to the same subjects, but on the basis of the general approach to prophetic literature this

discursiveness is no more marked than elsewhere in any of the prophetic writings. (iii) Chapters vii-ix, which are composed of a series of five visions, the first four of which are introduced with the phrase, 'Thus the Lord shewed me' (RV). These four are vii. 1-3: the locusts; vii. 4-6: the fire; vii. 7-9: the wall and the plumbline; viii. 1-3: the basket of late summer fruit. Into the midst of these, there is interposed the narrative of Amos's experience at Bethel when he fell foul of the High Priest Amaziah (vii. 10-17). After a general discourse against the evils of the time, we have the fifth vision (ix. 1-4) of the destruction of the shrine (? of Bethel) and the utter extermination of all who worship there. The book concludes with an epilogue which tells of the final restoration and prosperity of the Davidic dynasty of the Southern Kingdom.

It is evident that the whole book has been pieced together according to a definite scheme. The three clearly marked sections show this, and the impression is deepened by the fixed formulae which are used in the various sections. The former attitude was that Amos himself was responsible for the format of the book, and that 'after he had completed his prophetic ministrations at Bethel, he returned to his native home, and there at leisure arranged his prophecies in a written form' (Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 95). Such a supposition as this would account for the introduction here and there of references to the Southern Kingdom, particularly if a few years intervened between the first delivery of the oracles at Bethel and the final revision of the written text of them. Amos may have been like Philip J. Bailey and his *Festus*, the long dramatic poem which the author revised again and again, till he prepared the final revision for the fiftieth anniversary of its original publication. By this time it had become

'a sketch of world-life', running to some forty thousand lines.

In modern times, however, there have been three major elements which have entered into recent discussions of the writings of the prophets. We proceed to discuss these three elements in turn. They concern (i) the poetic or rhythmical form of prophecy, (ii) the various types of narrative employed, (iii) the conception of the writings of the prophets as a series of short oracles and poems, placed in order according to some particular scheme.

(i) *The rhythmical form of prophecy.* The modern study of Hebrew poetry begins with Lowth (1753), though as long ago as the first century A.D. Josephus realized that the two Songs of Moses (Exodus xv. 2 ff. and Deuteronomy xxxii) were in hexameters (*Ant. Jud.*, II, xvi, 4 and IV, viii, 44), and that the Psalms were in various metres, trimeters, and pentameters (*Ant. Jud.*, VII, xii, 3). Similar statements are to be found in Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, but the general opinion has been, at least until modern times, that the prophets are not in metrical form (so Jerome, specifically, *Praefatio in Isaiam*, ed. Migne, xxvii, 771). The whole history of the study of Hebrew poetry can be studied in G. B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915). He deals with the ideas of parallelism and rhythmical stresses and balance which are characteristic of Hebrew poetry, and incidentally of Mesopotamian and some Arabic poetry: For our immediate purpose, it is of interest to notice that G. B. Gray says on the first page of his Preface that he was compelled to consider the question of the forms of Hebrew poetry more fully when he came to prepare his ICC commentary on *Isaiah i-xxvii*. There are many short summaries of the characteristics of Hebrew poetry.

Two of the most satisfactory are to be found in G. B. Gray's introduction to his ICC commentary on Isaiah (1912), pp. lix-lxviii and in T. H. Robinson's introduction to *The Book of Amos*, Hebrew Text with notes (S.P.C.K., 1923), pp. 4-6.

It is not always easy to decide between 'poetry' and 'rhetorical prose', since Hebrew, like Arabic, naturally lends itself, at least in its golden age, to finely-balanced and free-flowing rhetoric. This can be seen, for instance, in C. M. Doughty's account of his travels in *Arabia Deserta*, where throughout the English is impregnated with the fullness of free-flowing Arabic speech. Some scholars still maintain that the prophet spoke in rhythmical prose rather than in poetry, but the tendency is all in favour of poetry, though the opinion of these scholars should warn us against applying rules of the strictest and most rigid form. This is what Duhm did with characteristic German thoroughness. He had his strict rules according to which he estimated Hebrew verse, and these he applied so rigidly that he reduced Jeremiah to about sixty short pieces, consisting of about only two hundred and fifty verses in all out of nearly twelve hundred. Later Hölscher said, 'What Duhm did for Jeremiah, I do for Ezekiel', with the result that he left one hundred and forty-three verses for Ezekiel out of 1272. Hölscher's thesis is shown by the title of his study of Ezekiel, which is *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch* (1924), i.e. 'the Poet and the Book'. There was clearly need for G. B. Gray, even before Hölscher's time, to consider more fully the forms of Hebrew poetry.

Hebrew poetry consists partly of 'sound-rhythm' and partly of 'idea-rhythm'. A line of Hebrew poetry consists of two or three sections (stichoi), each of which contains two, three, or four stressed syllables. Most

frequently there are two stichoi to the line, but sometimes there are three. The tendency is for a poem to consist of one particular type of line so far as rhythm is concerned, e.g. the tetrameter (2 : 2 rhythm), the hexameter (2 : 2 : 2 or 3 : 3 rhythm), or the pentameter (3 : 2 or 2 : 3). Occasionally we find a seven-stress line (heptameter), which may be either 2 : 2 and 3 or 3 : 2 and 2, but these lines are not common. The most common rhythms are 2 : 2 and 3 : 3, but in practice the Hebrew poets, whether prophets or psalmists, never regarded themselves as necessarily confined in one particular poem to one particular rhythm. It was the insistence upon such rigidity which led Duhm and Hölcher to make such drastic excisions in their editions of the prophets. Apart from the sound-rhythm, there is the idea-rhythm. This means that there is some sort of balance between the ideas in the various sections of the line. Such balance or 'parallelism' is to be found most clearly in the 2 : 2 and the 3 : 3 rhythms, e.g. Amos i. 2:

The-Lord from-Zion roars
 and-from-Jerusalem He-utters His-voice,
 And-lament the-pastures-of the-shepherds,
 And-withers the-top-of the-Carmel.

But perhaps the clearest example of all is to be found in Genesis xlix. 7c, d, which is a 2 : 2 line:

I-will-divide-them in-Jacob,
 And-I-will-scatter-them in-Israel.

The Prayer of Baruch (*Apoc. Baruch*, xlvi.) is a good example of sustained parallelism, generally of the true synthetic type where each element in one line is balanced with a corresponding element in the other.

Other types of parallelism are 'incomplete', cases in which the idea of the first line (or stichos) is partly carried on and partly developed in the second.

There can be little doubt but that the prophets used this Hebrew poetry as their medium of expression with its double characteristics of sound-rhythm and idea-rhythm. Occasionally they make use of the famous 3 : 2 rhythm, the 'qinah' (dirge, lament) rhythm. This rhythm is found in the first four poems of Lamentations, though not in the fifth. Its main characteristic is the uneven stichoi, the caesura being usually after the third stress, though sometimes after the second, whilst occasionally it includes a 2 : 2 stichos. We would not adopt the strict rules which Duhm and his successors have adopted, but would hold that where both rhythm and idea change, we have a new oracle distinct with what has gone before.

Some scholars hold that Hebrew poetry consists not only of the rhythmical lines to which we have referred, but also of stanzas made up of a regular number of lines to the stanza. This theory of Hebrew versification begins with Kösters (1813), and was developed by Schlottmann (1884) and by C. A. Briggs (1887). Further work has been done along this line by Müller (1895 and 1898), Zenner (1896), and Harper (1897-1900). Briggs's commentary on the *Psalms* (ICC, two volumes, 1906-7) and Harper's commentary on *Amos and Hosea* (1905) are both written with a rigid strophic theory in the author's mind, this being especially the case with Briggs's work on the *Psalms*. Other writers who have been influenced by theories of strophic structure are Elhorst (1900), Löhr (1901), Condamin (1901), Baumann (1903), and Marti (1903). All these theories demand considerable alterations, not only in the text itself, but in the order of the various lines, and

the tendency of the most recent scholarship is to regard the whole system of Hebrew versification as much more fluid than any rigid system of line-stresses or strophes would allow.

(ii) *The various types of narrative employed.* For this approach we are indebted chiefly to T. H. Robinson, who pointed out that there are three stylistic types in the prophetic writings. First there is Type A, which consists of oracular poetry. All that we have discussed under the previous heading comes under this type, and we must return to it again when we discuss the third new element in prophetic studies—namely, the idea of them being a collection of short oracles. Next there is Type B, which is biographical prose; and, thirdly, Type C, which is autobiographical prose. For a reasonably full discussion of this approach, see Oesterley and Robinson, *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* (1934), pp. 224-31. Perhaps the best example of the difference between Types B and C is to be seen in Isaiah vi-viii. Here chapters vi and viii (certainly verses 1-8; perhaps the rest, though this more probably is Type A) are autobiographical prose (Type C). The prophet is relating his own experiences and uses the first person. But chapter vii is biographical prose (Type B), and the experiences of the prophet are related in the third person. The same kind of distinctions is to be seen throughout the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. Mowinckel used the three types to distinguish the period at which the various sections were written, e.g. Type A, oracles which belong to the period from 580 B.C. to 450 B.C.; Type B, biographical narrative of the same period; and Type C, autobiographic narrative from the period 450 B.C. Mowinckel's judgement in dating these various sections seems to be strange, since it would be more natural to assume that

Type B was from another hand than the prophet himself, whilst Type C, being autobiographical, was from the prophet himself. But Mowinckel thought that the 'I' had been used in order to give a late oracle the authority of the prophet himself.

At any rate, we may safely say that these three types of prophetic writings are indications that the present prophetic books are built up from more than one source. The old idea of one connected whole is thus destroyed. In the Book of Amos all three types are found, though the major part of the book is Type A, oracular poetry. Type B is represented only by the narrative of Amos's adventures at Bethel, vii. 10-17. Type C (autobiographical prose) is represented by visions of chapters vii-ix, though this would not include viii. 4-14 and ix. 5 to end. Here we have the prose element interspersed with the oracles which the prophet states were delivered to him at the time. This is not an unusual feature of Type C, e.g. Jeremiah i. 5; and it is liable to occur in Type B also.

(iii) *The writings of the prophets as short oracles.* Generally speaking, everything under Type A is comprised in this section. As we have said, the various separate elements are to be fixed by changes in sound-rhythm and idea-rhythm, and we would not determine the limits of a section by sound-rhythm alone. But according to what scheme have the various oracular sections been placed together?

In the Book of Amos, one scheme is very clear in chapters i-ii. This is the establishment of a framework into which the oracles have been fitted, e.g. 'Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions . . . yea for four'. Something of a similar scheme has long since been noticed in the 'Hear ye this word' of iii. 1, iv. 1, v. 1; it was evidently a main criterion when the book was

divided into chapters. And there is another scheme evident in the 'Thus the Lord (Lord God, He) shewed me' of vii. 1, vii. 4, vii. 7, and viii. 1 of chapters vii and viii. These three clearly-marked schemes led to the old grouping of the book into three easily distinguished divisions. It is possible that these schemes go back to Amos himself, and belong either to the actual time when he delivered the oracles or to the time when they were written down. On the other hand, they may be due to an editor who classified his material into three fairly easily-defined groups, and added the 'captions' which would be characteristic of each of the groups in turn.

But a closer examination of the chapters shows that there are other criteria also by which we may mark the limits of the oracles. These are such phrases as 'Thus saith the Lord', e.g. iii. 12; and 'saith the Lord', e.g. v. 17; and the little group of oracles, iv. 6, 7-8, 9, 10, 11, all of which end with 'yet ye have not returned to Me, saith the Lord'. These phrases with other variants of them occur regularly at the end or at the beginning of small sections, frequently coinciding with changes both of rhythm and idea. We have therefore used these criteria in distinguishing between the various small sections of which the book is composed. Working from these assumptions, we have arranged the book (see *Part Two: Translation and Notes*), not in chapters, but according to the various sections of which the book is composed. This is the arrangement which T. H. Robinson has adopted in his translation of *The Book of Amos* (no date is given on the title page, but it was 1921) in the 'Books of the Old Testament in Colloquial Speech' (National Adult School Union) series; and it appears in such modern commentaries as that of Weiser (*Die Profetie des Amos*, Giessen, 1929), though he placed

the sections in the order which he believes is chronological. He holds that the original part of the book is vii. 1-9, viii. 1-3, ix. 1-10 (substantially), and that this part was composed by Amos himself. It will be remembered, this is the part which is Type C, the autobiographical narrative. He regards viii. 4-14 (Type A) as belonging originally to the remainder of the book, chapters i-vi, but holds that they were interpolated into the latter part before the two sections were combined together. The first section, chapters i-vi, he holds to have been collected by one of Amos's disciples, who also was responsible for vii. 10-17, which is Type B. All this we regard as being reasonably sound, especially since it is combined with the idea that all that is of Type A (oracular poetry) is composed of short oracles collected together. Weiser has sixty-two separate sections in the book. T. H. Robinson makes it fifty-eight. Our estimate is fifty-nine.

There is also another method of compilation of which we have been unable to find any trace in the Book of Amos, and this is by a system of catchwords. One section is placed next after its predecessor because of the same or similar words which are found in the beginning of one and the end of the other. A clear example of this is the way in which Isaiah i. 2-9 is linked to Isaiah i. 10-15 by the references to Sodom and Gomorrah (i. 9 and i. 10); cf. also Isaiah xlvi. 1 f. and 3 ff., where there are various words common to both sections, 'borne, carried, deliver'. But nothing of this type occurs in Amos.

V. AMOS: THE MAN AND THE PROPHET

AMOS was one of the herdmen of Tekoa, a township of Judah, in the hill country of Judah, ten miles or so south of Jerusalem, with Bethlehem roughly halfway between. Its modern counterpart, *Tequ'a*, is 2,788 feet above sea-level, with the land dropping away sharply eastwards. In two miles the level drops 800 feet, whilst twelve miles away is the Dead Sea, down in its trough, over 4,000 feet lower than Tekoa, with the mountains of Moab standing out like a red wall beyond. Six miles west of Tekoa is the central ridge of the hills of Judah, over 3,000 feet high, rising to 3,200 at *Beit Ummar*, due west of *Tequ'a*, and still over 3,000 feet high six miles south on the Plain of Mamre with Hebron.

In between Tekoa and the Dead Sea is the desolate Wilderness of Tekoa, *Jeshimon*, 'the waste and howling wilderness'. Sir George Adam Smith described it as 'one of the driest and most poisoned regions of our planet', and as 'a desolate and haggard world'. Here and on the western edges of this barren tract Amos moved to and fro with his flock of short-legged sheep, which the Arabs still call the *naqqad*, a dwarfed sheep with fine wool. Whether Amos was wealthy or not, we do not know. Jewish tradition has made him out to be a sheep-master, mostly because Mesha, King of Moab (Ahab's contemporary), is also described as a *noqed* in 2 Kings iii. 4. The Targum of vii. 14 infers that Amos voluntarily adopted a peasant's life because of the guilt of his people. On the other hand, his father's name is not given, and he had another occupation, a gatherer (AV) of sycamore figs (not 'sycamine', Luke xvii. 6, which is a mulberry), or a dresser (RV) of

sycomore figs. This 'dressing' involved scraping (LXX), nipping (Theodotion), or pinching (Vulgate), to promote the ripening of these small, insipid figs, the fare of the common people, by releasing the insects with which the fruit is infested so as to render the fruit fit for human consumption. This additional occupation makes it most probable that Amos was of humble parentage, especially since, in the absence of any genealogy and in his passionate championship of the poor, he has close associations with Micah, the peasant of Moresheth-gath and the William Langland of the Old Testament.

That Amos was fully and personally acquainted with the dangers of the shepherd's life is plain from the similes which he uses. He speaks of the lion (iii. 12, v. 19) and the bear (v. 19), the enemies of the flock in his time just as they had been in David's time in much the same area (1 Samuel xvii. 34-7). He knew how unlikely it is for two men ever to meet in the wilderness unless they first have fixed both time and place (iii. 3); he knew the sounds of the rocky bad-lands (*ya'ar*, usually translated 'forest') with the roar of the lion as he springs (iii. 5); the experiences of the working peasant come readily to his mind and tongue (ii. 13; v. 11; vi. 12, of the ploughman in rocky country with shallow soil; viii. 1). He knew of the plague of locusts toward the end of the season (vii. 1), of the firing of the desert scrub (v. 6, i. 4), and out of such experiences there grew a hard, stern man, a vigorous fighter for the right, a champion of the poor, more at home in the rigours of the desert and the hardships of the poor than in the ease of cities, without much softness of heart, and his message almost entirely one of doom.

On the other hand, Amos was not the rude, unlettered man which Jerome and some of his successors

have made him out to be. Robertson Smith¹ rightly defends Amos as a master of pure Hebrew style. Those were not the days of book-learning, when wisdom 'cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise', as Ben Sirach expressed it (Ecclesiasticus xxxviii. 24). Wisdom sprang out of shrewd observation and those long periods of silent meditation which the desert so amply provides. Hebrew was a spoken language rather than a literary one. Its script remained far too awkward for either its original genius or even its development to have been literary. Those who spoke this language and by whose speaking it grew in vigour and vividness, were natural orators. Their words fell naturally in rhythmic periods, garnished with all the imagery which is native to men who lived close to the earth and under the wide sky.

Nevertheless, the knowledge of this man Amos, the herdman of Tekoa, is surprising in its range and accuracy. He was a man who remembered what he had heard. He looked with his own eyes and remembered what he had seen. He knew the history of the surrounding nations, their origins and their deeds. His knowledge included the Nile and its rising, and Ethiopia away to the south. Perhaps he had travelled with the caravans, though such knowledge as he could gain from travellers would suffice, especially if he was accustomed to go to some central place in order to sell his wool. His detailed knowledge was limited to the peoples of Palestine and Syria, but he must always have had an open ear for tidings of men and their doings from whatever land. The days of his preaching were towards the end of Jeroboam II's long reign; when for some forty years Israel and Judah alike had

¹ *The Prophets of Israel*, 2nd ed., 1897, p. 125.

prospered because of the trade which passed through their countries, and Samaria had become for a little while a mart of some considerable importance.

Amos was not a member of the prophetic guilds, who roamed the country with their strange ecstasies in the days of Saul (1 Samuel x. 5, xix. 19-24), or were associated with the local shrines (2 Kings ii. 3, 5). Indeed, when Amaziah, chief priest of Bethel, told him to get back to his own country of Judah and earn his living there by his prophesying, 'he indignantly replied that he was not a prophet because he wanted to make a living out of it, but because he had to be'.¹ He was compelled by the power of God Himself to be a prophet, taken from after the sheep (vii. 15), just as David had been taken two hundred and fifty years earlier to be the Lord's Anointed. It was not that Amos was ashamed of being a prophet, or regarded himself as being essentially different from them. On the contrary, he was proud of it, and called himself such (iii. 7 f.). One of his complaints was that Israel had muzzled the prophets and corrupted the Nazirites (ii. 11 f.). For Amos, the prophet was a man whom God had called. This was the criterion. He might be an ecstatic or always of sober mind, he might be a member of the prophetic guilds either by birth or by recruitment, but was he conscious of a definite and clear word of God in his own heart and mind? If he was so conscious, then he was a prophet. 'The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' (iii. 8).

It is generally held that Amos preached entirely to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and certainly the visions of chapters vii-ix. 10 appear to be connected

¹ H. H. Rowley, 'The Nature of Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study', *Harvard Theological Review*, January 1945, p. 24.

with the royal sanctuary of Bethel. The sections iii. 9-11, iii. 12-15, iv. 1-3, and vi. 1-14 are concerned with Samaria, whilst iv. 4 ff. and v. 4 ff. are concerned with Northern shrines such as Bethel and Gilgal, both of them within easy reach of the south. Nevertheless, as the text of the book now stands, there are references which include Judah also—namely, ii. 4-5, iii. 1, vi. 1, ix. 11, and perhaps iii. 13 and ix. 8 ('House of Jacob'). Most scholars regard these passages as later interpolations, though there is the possibility that Amos may have been responsible for some of them after his return home from his preaching in the north. Büttenwieser (*Prophets of Israel*, 1914, pp. 232-6) would limit the passages addressed to the Northern Kingdom to a bare minimum, holding that the most of them are addressed as grave warnings to the Southern Kingdom of Judah also, though not pointing the moral as clearly and pointedly as it is done in Jeremiah iii. and Ezekiel xxiii. R. S. Cripps (*The Book of Amos*, 1929, pp. 12-14) is of the same opinion, thinking it scarcely possible that 'of all men the prophet of Justice could not have denounced the faults of *ten* tribes and at the same time been blind to those of the other *two*', though admitting that 'at this time North Israel stood in need of the message rather more than did the Southern Kingdom'. On the other hand, as we have pointed out elsewhere,¹ it is characteristic even of the great canonical prophets that 'every prophet finds it more easy to speak about the ultimate punishment of rebellion against God, when he is discussing the crimes of the rival people'. Similarly, 'every prophet finds it more easy to emphasize the wideness of God's mercy when he is speaking of his own folk'. Jeremiah had associations with both North and South, and looks forward to a common

¹ *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, Epworth Press, 1944, p. 119.

restoration. Both Amos and Isaiah, the two southerners, are full of condemnation against the rival kingdom of the North, whilst Isaiah, in spite of all his criticisms of the South, is certain that Jerusalem will remain inviolate. Hosea, speaking to his own people, has a message of restoration (ii. 15 f.) after tribulation and exile. It is therefore by no means unnatural that Amos should see more clearly the vices of the Northern Kingdom, and tend to be less declamatory against the shortcomings of the South. Wrongs were more rampant in the North, and they belonged to another country. The prophets were not wholly emancipated from national prejudices, and are comrades with many of us to-day.

VI. THE MESSAGE OF AMOS

(a) '*The time is at hand.*' The whole of the message of the prophet Amos must be set in its context of imminent disaster. Even though all seems well, and the wealthy ones are living in careless ease and luxury (vi. 1-7: XXXVII, p. 108). (The large Roman numerals refer to the various sections in *Part Two: Translation and Notes*). Heavy doom is hanging over all. Jehovah is a lion already roaring as He springs upon His prey (i. 2: II, p. 9). This is the burden of the first oracle in the book, the couplet which forms the motto of the whole collection of oracles. The whole country will be destroyed (vi. 8: XXXVIII, p. 114), by plague (vi. 9-10: XXXIX, p. 115), by fire (vii. 4-6: XLV, p. 121), and every last survivor will be ruthlessly hunted down and destroyed (ix. 1-4: LII, p. 137). Time and again God has warned them, calling them to repentance by His disciplines of the natural world, famine and drought, blight and pestilence and earthquake

(iv. 6-11: XXII-XXVI, pp. 73-8). Now the worst drought of all will come, for the monsoon will fail, and even the fairest and strongest will fall and never rise again (viii. 11-14: L-LI, pp. 134-7). The final judgement has come, and even now God is testing the crooked wall with His plumbline, determined to destroy what no longer can be made upright (vii. 7-9: XLV, p. 123). Israel is like a basket of over-ripe fruit, ready to fall and quick to go bad (viii. 1-3: XLVII, p. 128).

(b) *The rejection of Israel.* Israel is a people of especial privilege, since with Israel alone has Jehovah had special and intimate relations (iii. 2: XV, p. 55). God brought Israel out of Egypt, 'led him about, instructed him, kept him as the apple of His eye', as the roughly contemporary Song of Moses says (Deuteronomy xxxii. 10, AV). He brought them through the wilderness into the fair land of the Amorites, a people whose height and strength were legendary; and this after having led them all the forty years through the wilderness. He rooted out the inhabitants of Canaan root and branch, and gave them possession of the land (ii. 9-12: XII, p. 47). He gave them prophets out of their midst, but they refused to listen and sought to muzzle them. He gave them Nazirites from their midst who might hold them to the good old ways (ii. 11 f.), but they made the Nazirites break their desert vows and follow the ways of Canaan. Therefore Israel now is rejected, and has become no more than African negroes (so T. H. Robinson) before God. It is quite true, says the prophet, that God brought Israel out of Egypt, but that now means no more than the fact that He brought the Philistines from Crete and the Syrians from Qir, beyond Damascus: the uncircumcised Philistines whom they had learned to loathe, and

Israel's ancient enemies, the Syrians of Damascus. God is watching to destroy the sinful nation, and to sweep it away from the face of the earth (ix. 7-8a: LIV, p. 141). He will crush the whole nation like the roller of the threshing-floor, as it crushes and pounds every sheaf that is there (ii. 13-16: XIII, p. 51). The sentence is passed, and her doom is writ. There is now no turning back (ii. 6: X, p. 36), and Israel's wickedness is like the wickedness of Syrian-Damascus, of Philistia, of Ammon, and of Moab (i. 3-8: III, p. 12, IV, p. 20; i. 13-ii. 3: VII, p. 27, VIII, p. 29), except that Israel has the greater privilege and the greater opportunity.

(c) *Charges against the rich.* Amos does formulate general charges against Israel, but they are all pointed against the rich and well-to-do. This may be partly because Amos himself belonged to the lower classes, and could therefore understand just how the poor man suffered and was wronged. His main charge is against the ruthlessness of the rich, who persistently use their wealth and power to screw the last farthing out of the unfortunate. They sell up the honest poor man for the smallest debt (ii. 6 f.: X, p. 36). They take the wine he has had to leave with them as security for debt, and even his very garments (ii. 8: XI, p. 42). The rich women are worse than their husbands, for they keep on nagging them to get yet more money to spend on feasting and drunkenness—fat, sleek Bashan cows, says Amos, who will soon be dragged out as useless carcasses and thrown on the dunghill (iv. 1-3: XX, p. 68). And so they continue, trampling down the common people, getting load after load of corn out of them, living in marble palaces, in summer houses and winter houses, mansions faced with ivory and ebony (v. 11 f.: XXXI, p. 85, and iii. 14 f.: XIX, p. 66). Let them have their divans and cushioned couches, for they will need them

in which to cower and hide when the evil day comes. No one will be saved then, except an odd man cowering and jibbering in the corner of the couch (iii. 12 f.: XVIII, p. 64).

But not only do the rich make use of the courts in their exploitation of the poor, but there is no sort of justice there. All is bitterness, and the courts are no places for honest men. He is a wise man who keeps silence there, for no honest witnesses find a welcome. The honest man is bullied out of truth and property and life (v. 7, 10-13: XXXI, p. 85). The prophet demands justice and right action between man and man, and maintains that God will be satisfied with nothing else.

(d) *Worship in the shrine and wickedness in the city.* To make matters worse, all this oppression is allied with fervent religious exercises. The very clothes and the wine which they have taken in foreclosing for debt, they use in order to make themselves comfortable before the altar and to add to the enjoyment of their 'sacred' feasts (ii. 8: XI, p. 42). The shrines of the North—Bethel and Gilgal as the chief of them—have no lack of worshippers. They take there their sacrifices, their tithes thrice a year, their thank-offerings, and they fulfil their vows according to all correct precedent (iv. 4 f.: XXI, p. 71). But God is not mocked or deceived. He loathes all this fulsome ritual. He has no use for their annual feasts, their magnificent closing festivals, and all their gifts and rich offerings. He cannot stand any longer their noisy songs and the strumming of their harps. In the old desert religion there was none of this, and it is foreign to His ways (v. 21-7: XXXVI, p. 98). In fact, Amos bids them cease to frequent these sanctuaries, since he is certain that the God of Israel is not worshipped there. Going to Bethel

and Gilgal is nothing more than rebellion against God (iv. 4: XXI, p. 71), and the more often they go there, the worse their rebellion. The contrast is made clear; consulting the oracles and the priests at Bethel, Gilgal, or even across country to Beersheba, is one thing, and consulting Jehovah the God of Israel is another (v. 4-6: XXX, p. 83), for these shrines will be utterly destroyed. God already is standing by the altar, and He is going to bring the whole place crashing down, and none will survive (ix. 1-4: LII, p. 137). No flight will avail in that evil day, and there is no place in which a man may hide and find safety, neither in heaven or hell, on land or sea.

Amos makes one specific charge against immoral rites at the shrines, when he says how father and son both go to the Temple prostitute, and thus defile the holy Name (ii. 7b: XI, p. 42). From this we judge that Amos's tirades against the worship of the local shrines is due to the syncretistic worship that existed there. The reference to the worship of Sakkut-Saturn, one of the star-gods of Assyria (v. 26: XXXVI, p. 107), confirms this view. Let them shoulder their foreign idols and take them away with them into the captivity they have richly earned. The prophet, we presume, is thinking of the purer cult at Jerusalem, and when he bids them consult Jehovah and not the oracles at Bethel and Gilgal, it is probable that this is what is in his mind. It is from Jerusalem-Zion that Jehovah speaks (i. 2: II, p. 9).

(e) *Jehovah is a God of righteousness.* The root and basis of all that has gone before is Amos's own personal knowledge of the God of Israel. He was no professional prophet who might be prophesying because his father prophesied before him, or because he had been adopted into the prophetic guilds. He was a peasant-shepherd

who eked out a living by tending the insipid sycamore figs for common people to eat. Far from turning prophet in order to earn his living, he left his living in order to act as a prophet. God took him away from his sheep, and gave him a special and particular message to speak forth (vii. 10-17: XLVI, p. 125; and iii. 8: XV, p. 55). His message is based on his firm conviction that Jehovah is a God of righteousness. Because of this, it has often been said that these eighth-century prophets are primarily ethical prophets. As we have pointed out,¹ it is important to realize that they were not primarily ethical prophets, but primarily religious prophets, and secondarily ethical prophets. By this we would not suggest for one moment that their emphasis on matters ethical should be minimized. On the contrary, we would emphasize it. Their insistence upon right conduct was based upon what they knew of the Nature of God, i.e. the origin of their emphasis was in the religious realm. They did not base their ethical teaching on what was good and right in man, but upon what they knew of the nature of God. Here we find a great distinction between the Hebrew teaching and the Greek teaching. Not only were the great Greek ethical teachers many generations later than these eighth-century prophets, but their message was primarily ethical. They reformed their ideas of the gods from their ethical ideals. With the Hebrew prophets it was quite otherwise. They formed their ideas of what man ought to be and do from what they came to know of the Nature of God.

And so 'sin' is not transgression, but rebellion (see *Part Two*, p. 14), i.e. it is not a moral lapse from some established code, but a definite and personal rebellion against God. Similarly, when Amos talks of a

¹ *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, pp. 59 ff.

reformation he talks of 'turning back' to God, i.e. a return from rebelling against Him (iv. 6, 8, 9, 10: XXI-XXIV, pp. 73 f.). The whole matter is therefore a personal relationship, and Israel's only hope has ever been that he should stand in this right relationship with God. God has laid His commands upon Israel, and it is Israel's duty to obey.

To Amos, Jehovah has power over the natural world, though his ideas concerning this power are not materially different from those of the earlier strands of the Pentateuch. In the J-tradition, Jehovah sends fire (Genesis xix. 24) and pestilence (Exodus xii. 29), and according to the E-tradition he sends drought (Genesis xli. 27 f.). He sends the locusts (Amos vii. 1-3: XLIII, p. 119) just as he sent the plagues of Egypt. He makes the sun to be eclipsed at noon-day and the day to grow dark (viii. 9 f.: XLIX, p. 132). In the genuine Amos passages, we do not read of God as controlling the heavenly bodies, whilst the splendid picture of His palace in the sky is from a later hand. All such passages are in the doxologies (v. 8 f.: XXXII, p. 90; iv. 13: XXVII, p. 79; and ix. 5 f.: LIII, p. 140). To Amos, so far as Nature is concerned, Jehovah is not very much more than the God who controls the incidents of Palestine, though this means that His power extends as far as Amos's horizon, and not much more could ever be demanded. Jehovah's power over the nations, to Amos, involves retribution upon the peoples immediately surrounding Israel, the Syrians of Damascus, the Philistines, Ammon, and Moab. Further in his statement of the rejection of Israel, Amos says that God brought the Philistines from Crete, and the Syrians from Qir, equally with the Israelites out of Egypt. Jehovah then is all-powerful within the limits of Amos's horizon.

The modern tendency is to read back to Moses those ethical demands which a previous generation has regarded as the great contribution of the eighth-century prophets. Further, the tendency has been to read back into the Mosaic period those special doctrines of Election-choice which are stated explicitly in Amos iii. 2. In this case, the work of the eighth-century prophets is really a revival of the old Mosaic religion. For the modern point of view concerning this matter, see H. H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (1944). We would hold that what is mostly implicit in the message of Moses is for the first time made explicit in the teaching of Amos and the prophets. The choice of Israel by God and its immediate consequence in the deliverance from Egypt is plainly to be seen in all the ancient traditions. The Old Testament is the story of the preparation for that great Work of God, and God's working out of His purpose through the generations. The obligations laid on Israel are to be seen in the basis of the earlier traditions, i.e. the J- and E-traditions as they are embedded in the Pentateuch. These traditions were written down in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., the J-tradition in the south and the E-tradition in the north. We may suppose that Amos is in part the product of that revival of Jehovah worship in the south, the beginning of which may well be associated with the writing down there of the J-tradition. Further, his work in the north coincides roughly with the writing down of the E-tradition in the north. We are therefore in the midst of a great revival of the Mosaic tradition, and out of this revival there comes much that was implicit from the beginning, but brought out more vividly because of the needs of the time. This would account for the fact that the ancient desert traditions are so strong in these eighth-century

prophets. Amos, for instance, is a man of the desert, born and bred. He has no use for the elaborate ritual of the Israelite-Canaanite shrines. He speaks with violence against the drunkenness and immorality which was a feature of the worship at these shrines. He regrets the seduction of the Nazirites. All the time he is inspired by the things and traditions which belong to the desert. The same features are to be seen in Hosea, and, in spite of his city ways, in Isaiah of Jerusalem. The great desert-loving Deuteronomic Song of Moses belongs to the same general period, i.e. Deuteronomy xxxii.

With Amos and the eighth-century prophets we have then a leap forward in the development of Old Testament religion, and the firm ground from which the leap is made is the old Mosaic religion of the desert, largely overgrown during the intervening centuries with the weed of Canaanite cults. The new vigour of the old faith gives new point to the ancient idea of election, i.e. God's special choice of Israel. It gives new emphasis to the things which are required of God's people, and it makes more vivid the idea of the God who is ever present and active on behalf of His people.

(f) *Jehovah the Saviour*. One of the important features which are brought into new prominence in the teaching of the eighth-century prophets is God's particular care for the poor and downtrodden. We have discussed this elsewhere.¹ It is evident that throughout the oracles of Amos there is a bias in favour of the poor and needy. Again and again the prophet is insisting that righteousness and justice must be worked out in the relation of the rich to the poor. In fact, it is but rarely that either of the words occurs in any other context. When

¹ *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, pp. 68-78.

they do occur without special and immediate reference to the poor and downtrodden (e.g. v. 24), the general body of the teaching involves forthwith such thoughts. This emphasis on the need of justice for the poor is a feature of the eighth-century prophets generally. In the cases of Amos and Micah, we certainly know that they were speaking for their own class, and this may be the case with Hosea also. But it is certainly not the case with Isaiah, who was of the aristocracy, a companion of the counsellors of kings from his youth, and himself in his manhood one of the king's most faithful advisers. In any case, the fact that a man of the people speaks of the wrongs of the people is not in itself evidence of untoward bias. It may be, as indeed it was in the case of Amos, that it is evidence of his knowledge of the true state of affairs. Men do not readily understand what they have not seen and experienced for themselves.

We do not suppose for one moment that every rich man in eighth-century Israel was necessarily an oppressor of the poor, nor, on the other hand, that every poor man was thereby a model of rectitude. Nevertheless, it is safe to maintain that the prophets said what they did because these things needed to be said. 'Here most in human affairs there was room for improvement.' Here most in eighth-century Israel had men strayed from the old Mosaic traditions. Amos's tirades against the courts are based primarily on his knowledge that such things are contrary to the Nature of the God who had revealed Himself first in the Wilderness of Sinai to Moses, and now again to Amos in the Wilderness of Tekoa. Once again, as it chanced, God had taken a man away from after the sheep, and given him great things to say and do. But, as it worked out, the actual occasion of Amos's realizing

this weakness in the social structure of his time was the ill-treatment and oppression of the poor.

The result of this emphasis on the ill-treatment of the poor has been a linking of the idea of Righteousness with the idea of Salvation from the very beginning of the prophetic teaching. This is a new element which appears for the first time in Amos and his contemporaries. It is one of the most important factors in the development of Old Testament religion, and it marks a fundamental difference between the righteousness of Hebrew religion and the righteousness of Greek ethical writers. With the Greeks *dikaiosune* has always mainly this reference to conduct. It is an idea of ethical excellence, at its best infused with a goodly humanitarianism. With the Hebrews, *tsedaqah* (righteousness) had already, thanks to the prophets, a fixed and irrevocable association with God's saving activity on behalf of His people. Amos has practically nothing to say explicitly about God's saving activity on behalf of the Israel of that day. His one generally agreed appeal is v. 4-6: XXX, p. 83, for it is probable that v. 14 f.: XXXIII, p. 93, is from a later hand. Otherwise he regards Israel as past hope; she is fallen, never more to rise (v. 2: XXVIII, p. 81). But in respect of God's steady anxiety on behalf of the poor and the helpless, there is continual emphasis on His saving work.

From the time of Moses, Jehovah had been recognized as the great Deliverer. The rescue from Egypt is embedded in all Hebrew-Jewish traditions as the greatest of all His saving works. The sacred writers could never talk of any deliverance without reference to this first great Salvation which He wrought. The difference in the content of this idea which we owe to the eighth-century prophets and their successors is in their interweaving of the ideas of righteousness and

salvation, and this because of their concern for the poor and helpless. The fruit of this development can be seen in later times, where the Hebrew word *tsedaqah* (in Amos 'righteousness' shown chiefly in dealings with the poor) comes to be used for 'charity, benevolence and even 'indiscriminate hospitality' (see the Midrash on Genesis, known as *Bereshith Rabba*, p. 49). In Matthew vi. 1 our English Versions vary between 'alms' (AV) and 'righteousness' (RV). This is because the manuscripts vary, and the Textus Receptus has *eleemosune* (pity, almsgiving, charity), this being an assimilation to the following verse from the true text which is represented in RV. There *dikaiosune* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *tsedaqah* in its late sense of 'almsgiving, charity'. We have pointed out that there are many instances in the writings of Paul where the Greek *dikaiosune* has a religious rather than an ethical meaning.

We hold therefore that the great importance of the teaching of Amos is to be seen in the later developments of Hebrew religion which grew out of the conditions under which he preached. We hold also that it would have been far better both for Jewry and Christendom if this special and unique Hebrew development had not been clouded over by legalistic and predominantly ethical teaching. With the Jews, the growing emphasis on the Law tended to overlay the personal religious saving activity of God, especially after the time of Ezra, when the Law became the rule and norm of daily life, and religious living became mostly a matter of fulfilling certain rules, mostly ethical. With the Christians, the teaching of the New Testament (which in some respects, putting it at its very lowest level, was a revival of the idea that God is personally in the midst of His people seeking to save

them) came to be embedded in an alien philosophy. It is a tragedy that so many of the Christian theologians in earlier times were philosophers before they became Christians. The result of this has been a tendency for the philosophers of Greece and the ethical teachers of Rome to dominate Christian thinking so as to put into the background the primary religious saving activity of God which is the great contribution of Old Testament religion. This tendency has been enhanced by the fact that the Bible came to us first in Greek and then in Latin, with the result that there has been a tendency to interpret religion primarily in ethical terms, and to give these ethical terms the fundamental meaning of the Greeks and the Romans. 'Righteousness' has been primarily the Greek *dikaiosune*, and 'Justice' has been primarily the Roman *justitia*. In our view, the Reformation was an attempt to break the shackles of Greece and Rome, just as the Renaissance was largely a refastening of those shackles. Old Testament religion, i.e. the religion which the prophets lived and spake, was primarily a matter of the saving work of God in the life first of the nation, and later, as ideas developed, in the heart of the individual. In all this Amos was the pioneer.