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much; but Chown did more, and soon the great St. George's Hall would be filled every time he was announced. Temperance was not then recognized as much more than the fad of a few; but he threw himself into the battle, not on mere utilitarian or financial or social grounds, but as a Christian. It is no wonder that when Bloomsbury needed a new leader, he was called to transfer his energies southward. But London is too big for a man to exercise the sway in it that he can in a town that has a pride in itself. And thenceforth his influence was more concentrated within the denomination, which honoured itself by calling him to the presidency nearly forty years ago.

His only sister remained in Northampton, and there she, too, devoted herself to temperance work. She was a founder of the Women's Total Abstinence Union, and throughout an abnormally long life gave thought and energy to this and kindred work.

Of later generations we will not speak here. But such a record may show the value of our ancestors, the power of example and training, the gain to a city when men who render to God what is God's, render also to Caesar what is Caesar's. Every generation, from 1648, has seen at least one member in the ministry; the present can show members in several branches of national service.

The Message of Amos and its Bearing on Modern Problems.

IT is sometimes said that we need to-day to get away from the Old Testament, and concentrate on the Gospels. If this means that we must avoid the error of thinking that all parts of our Bibles represent religious ideals of the same validity and of equal authority, then nothing could be more self-evident. But if it means that we can disregard the spiritual history of Israel, and forget that when the full revelation of God came in bodily form, He came as a Jew, then few things could be more dangerous. There were certain features of Judaism which Jesus adopted so thoroughly as to say little or nothing about them. Such were its ethics and its monotheism, and as we are in danger of forgetting that in His day the Jew was the only person in the world to whom there was only one God—for the monotheism of the philosophers was hardly religion—and that no one else ever thought of connecting the ideas of God and righteousness as He did. And it may well be that amongst those whose

teaching Jesus tacitly adopted for Himself, we may find worked out problems analogous to those of our own day. From some points of view the Prophets are strikingly modern, and few more so than Amos. His message is worth studying.

To appreciate the first of the prophets whose words have come down to us in our Bibles, it is necessary to look some centuries further back to the time when Israel first entered the Promised Land, and when she was still struggling to make good her foothold. She had had her own religion in the desert. Of its details we are in a large measure ignorant, but there seems to be a real concensus on the part of the prophets that it was without sacrifice and practically without ritual. There can be little doubt that it was of a type more or less familiar to us from other peoples on a similar level of civilization. That civilization was essentially pastoral and nomadic. The wealth of the people consisted largely, if not entirely, in flocks and herds, and the ordinary occupation of Israel must have been that of the wandering tribes who have no settled home and who move about wide spaces of country in order to find suitable pasturage for their animals. In so far as there was any organization, it was that of the tribe or clan, sometimes associated with others like it, and sometimes living alone, " with its hand against every man, and every man's hand against it." Each tribe had its own God, and the characteristic feature of the work of Moses was that it was he who had introduced the tribes to their God and unified them under a single faith. The name of their God, self-revealed through Moses, was Yahweh (camouflaged in the English Bible under the name " the LORD "—in small capitals), and He claimed their whole and absolute devotion. They were the people of Yahweh, and Yahweh was the God of Israel. But this did not preclude a belief in the existence of other gods, and there are indications in the Old Testament which show that long after the settlement in Canaan they were prepared to recognize the reality of the gods of the nations round them, and to accept their claims on other nations. But for Israel there was only one God. However real others might be, it was Yahweh alone with whom they as a people stood in immediate contact.

The conquest of Canaan proved to be a supreme test of their religious loyalty. They entered into a civilization on a higher plane than their own. They found men living in cities of brick and stone instead of tents, making homes which remained unmoved for generations, instead of wandering over "no man's land," cultivating corn and vines and olives instead of merely tending sheep. They came into the midst of a people well advanced in the arts and crafts; their terror of " chariots of iron " is significant of their outlook. Gradually they exterminated these people or absorbed them; little by little they learnt their methods and their

arts. Adopting these things, it would not have been surprising if they had adopted their religion and their gods as well. How real the danger of their doing so actually was can be gleaned from the words of the prophets. Yahweh had served them well enough in the desert. He had led them through strange paths and found for them water and herbage, the two primary needs of a pastoral people. He had fought their battles, and was renowned as a warrior God. But, with their limited experience and views they may well be forgiven if they asked themselves from time to time whether He could grow corn. That this question was asked—and answered in the negative—is clear from passages like Hosea ii. 9, which show that even at the very end of the northern monarchy, men failed to realize the true source of those aids that the farmer needs to secure success. Also there was a certain amount of fear lest the gods of the dispossessed nations should turn vengeful. This was well illustrated in the case of Yahweh Himself, when the "mixed peoples" planted by the Assyrians were plagued by lions, and had to send for Yahweh-priests from Assyria to teach them the right method of worshipping Him. It is true that in the main they learnt their lesson, in bitter suffering. But even then they were far from understanding its implications, and thought of Yahweh as the Canaanites had thought of their gods. Worship was continued at the "high places," those immemorial sanctuaries attached to each town and village, where men had averted the hostility and secured the favour of their local gods. Nor does it seem that the ritual was greatly changed. The ancient forms of Canaanite sacrifice were still observed, though offered to Yahweh. The common meal was still held in honour of the God, though He bore a new name, and in it He and His people were still believed to share. His altar was still the refuge for the runaway and the criminal. Men still brought to His priests their difficulties and disputes for settlement by divine sentence, though that sentence was now passed, not by a local, but by a national God. And it would seem that the more terrible and the grosser elements in Canaanite religion were maintained, and the Israelites would commit at the shrines, in all the odour of sanctity, acts for which they would have been stoned to death had they been guilty of them in secular life.

Such conditions are far from being unique. In many parts of Asia, where people are nominally Buddhists, the old degraded heathenism persists, thinly overlaid with Buddhist terminology. And in parts of Europe—till the Reformation perhaps the whole of Europe—the ancient religions remained almost unchanged, save by the substitution of the names of Christian saints for pagan gods. But in Israel there seems to have been one saving feature. Culture and civilization were very unequally

spread over the country, and in the wilder parts, on the borders of the desert, in the sparse vegetation and scanty water supply which made for the continuance of pastoral habits, the genuine Israelite faith and the primitive character of Yahweh maintained their hold. It is a striking fact that the two earliest champions of righteousness, Elijah and Amos, were both men of the desert border.

Instead, then, of a complete "syncretism" such as is found to-day in Tibet or Brittany, there seem to have been two forms of Israelite religion existing side by side, the one simpler, more primitive, but immeasurably purer, the other more highly developed, more highly civilized, but at the same time spiritually weak and morally degraded almost beyond belief.

Yet it may not be wholly true to say that the morality of Tekoa was "higher" than that of Samaria. The ethics of a simple people may be purer just because they have never been exposed to the temptations involved in the development of a more complicated social order. But from certain points of view there can be no doubt that the simpler life *is* the purer. Amos had never in his life been exposed to the dangers accompanying a fair amount of leisure, a luxurious standard of comfort, and the possibility of great wealth. One may then fairly assume that the community in which he was brought up was free from the darker features of the religious life of northern Israel. We have to picture to ourselves the startling contrast presented to his eyes when first he came into contact with Samarian luxury. He brought with him a freedom of spirit and an independence of outlook which saved him from the numbing influence of familiarity. It is not easy for men brought up in a community to stand out from it and form a fair judgment upon it, even when they are conscious that things are wrong. They are apt to be blinded by association, and oppressed by the knowledge that they cannot escape from personal complicity. This helps us to appreciate the full greatness of Hosea and Jeremiah, both grander personalities than even Amos. For of him this is emphatically not true. He had been accustomed all his life to the wide spaces of the South, to the rolling hills on whose broad slopes travellers are so rare that the presence of two together can be no accident but must have been prearranged. To him the sky had been a dome of expansive grandeur in whose blue depths he had watched the flight of the vulture to where some dying creature, it might be miles away, had caught its glance, and it had grown in one rapid swoop from a circling speck to the largest of winged things. He had heard and understood the hollow roar of the lion as he leaped upon his prey in the thickets of the marshy bottoms. He had met the bear, the most dreaded of all four-footed beasts, and had seen the snakes coiled in the

holes of crumbling walls. The things that are most familiar to him are the things of the out-door world, and from his various experience of nature he comes to the complicated and artificial life of the great city with an amazing clarity of vision which pierces far below the surface and penetrates the most attractive disguise. It was, perhaps, only such a man as this who could see the rotting civilization of Samaria as it really was, and could give to her habits and customs the right and proper names.

For there could be no doubt as to the rottenness of that society into whose midst Amos found himself at Bethel. Years of cruel border warfare had tended to depress and impoverish the tillers of the soil. The comparative freedom which had been enjoyed since the decline of Damascus brough little relief to the "lower" classes. There had flowed into the great cities a wealth which was no longer the product of the exertions of the citizens themselves, applied directly to the natural resources of their own land. It would seem that almost all the markets of the known world were now open to Israel, and from her central position, holding the bridge that leads from Asia to Africa, she could levy a formal or informal toll on all the merchandise that passed from one continent to the other. It is clear that there grew up at the same time the perilous habit of making money for its own sake. Farming is always liable to need financial loans, though it is likely that there had always been some restriction on the extent to which the owner of money might profit by his neighbour's misfortunes. But such limits, if they ever existed, were no longer observed. The small farmer who failed to redeem his mortgage lost his land. A step further, and he became the serf, the absolute property of the wealthy capitalist. Land-grabbing of this kind was one of the crimes most fiercely denounced by Amos and Isaiah, and the former has bitter complaints of the people who rack-rented their tenants. As not infrequently happens in the East, the rich had the legal machinery at their disposal. It would seem that a mortgage could not be foreclosed without an appeal to a court of some kind. No form of social wrong is more common in eastern lands than the corruption of justice. The venality of the judge is one of the most prominent features of Amos' protest. Even the smallest bribe—a pair of shoes would do—was enough to secure the condemnation and the enslavement of a poor man. It is possible that men sometimes even went so far as to make a claim of this kind when there was no loan at all, and the verdict had not the slightest justification either in fact or in law.

Hand in hand with the oppression of the poor went the shallow luxury of the rich. Greedy, selfish, and shameless women, tasteless domestic ostentation, Jingoism, and national conceit—

these were the most striking elements in the ordinary life of the townsfolk as Amos saw them. Further, the demands of religion exercised no restraining influence. On the contrary, the claims of worship were not seldom invoked to shelter some unusually iniquitous conduct. The common law of Israel provided that if a man's outer garment, the simple robe that serves the oriental peasant as a cloak, a cushion, a mattress, and a coverlet, were taken as security against a debt, it must be restored to the owner at night, lest he suffer too greatly from the cold. But there was an exception to the law, and if the creditor could make the excuse that he needed the article for some sacred ceremony such as "incubation," he felt no obligation to return it. Violence and oppression were held to be justified if they were the means whereby wine could be secured for the sacramental meals at the shrines. Fornication—and that in some of its most loathsome forms—was practised in connection with the worship of Yahweh Himself. If anybody was morally guilty in the matter, it was not the man who did the act, but the God who was supposed to demand it. Even where the cultus was not stained with the grosser forms of iniquity, it was an external thing, a matter at best of elaborate ritual, the rigid observance of outward forms and feasts, with no spiritual or even mental consecration to correspond. Of the conception of religion as a personal and spiritual relationship with a morally holy God, Amos found no trace in the sanctuaries of his day.

It seemed, indeed, as if nothing could arouse the conscience of Israel. Disasters that befell other people were attributed to the whimsical patriotism of the national God. No honest critic could secure a hearing. Blow after blow had fallen upon Israel herself, yet she utterly failed to connect her misfortunes with Yahweh's passion for righteousness. Famine, drought, blight, epidemic disease, earthquake, eclipse—if these things were recognized as the work of Yahweh, they were regarded only as a demand for more strenuous religiosity. If attention were called to the facts, and to their ethical implications, the bold speaker was promptly charged with treasonable aims. An honest prophet was outside the experience of the men of Jeroboam II. For nearly a century, when the inspired man had interfered with public matters, his motives had been political. The revolution which had placed on the throne that very dynasty to which Jeroboam himself belonged had been engineered by the "prophetic" party, and probably Amos himself was only protected by the superstition which held his ecstasy sacrosanct. The spiritual starvation with which the southern prophet threatened the people had already been their lot for three generations past. The faculty for God had been suppressed to the point of atrophy.

Amos saw and understood all this. But if one would see his

full greatness, it will be necessary to see him not only in contrast with those whom he condemned, but equally in contrast with others who stood as he did for the purer and simpler outlook of more primitive Israel. For in his instinct for a better life and in his sense of iniquity, Amos did not stand alone. The syncretism which had given religious sanction to the worst sins of Israel, had naturally affected most those who were concerned with the operations of agriculture, and lived in the more fertile lands. In the wilder hills where Israel had first established herself, in the great desert spaces which nurtured the hardier type to which Amos himself belonged, there were still those who clung to the earlier and more truly Mosaic form of religion. This double tradition of Israelite faith is not always obvious, but there are indications of its existence. It was not an accident that Elijah himself, the forerunner of the great ethical prophets, came also out of the wild. And even in the heart of the land there were tribes and groups who stood for the purer cult of nomadic times. Such were the Rechabites and the Nazirites, who, in spite of temptation and possibly persecution, still clung to their testimony.

The Nazirite and the Rechabite, however, had one cure for the sickness of Israel, Amos had another. To them the evil was civilization, and was only to be cured by the most drastic social surgery. Both refused to touch the vine or its products. It does not appear that they had any protest to utter against drunkenness—one hears no word against palm-wine. But the vine was the most obvious article of cultivation, and that which most fully implied a community settled on the land. Razors were not usual in the desert, so the Nazirite let his hair grow. Pastoral tribes lived in tents, not in solidly built houses, so the Rechabite eschewed brick and stone. To him all this elaboration and complication of life was something strange, foreign to the genius of Israel, and therefore to be avoided by all true worshippers of Yahweh. The difficulties could only be met by abolishing the whole scheme of life as practised in Samaria, and reverting to the habits of the desert even in a rich and fertile land. The newer manners had proved a source of temptation: righteousness could only be attained by the disappearance of that temptation.

Such a position was only natural to an honest, enthusiastic, but short-sighted man. It is inevitable that fresh conditions of life should bring with them fresh possibilities of evil. It is almost equally inevitable that men who stand for righteousness should see in the new conditions the *fons et origo mali,* the spring of all the rottenness and corruption of their time. It is impossible not to sympathize with such a feeling. It is all very well to stigmatize it as narrow-minded, but it does make for character, and it does help to keep alive the sense for goodness.

No doubt it may develop into casuistry and superficial hypocrisy —perhaps worse dangers than the more blatant forms of wrong —but it does testify to the existence of a moral ideal. Yet its methods are conservative and even retrograde. It ignores the truth that wherever there is real life there is also growth. There is an evolutionary element in social as well as in physical life, and in the long run the one is no more to be checked than the other. Humanity moves forwards and not backwards. A social order may come to a catastrophic end, but it cannot retrace its steps. It is at best only a piece of machinery, and it is entirely dependent for its efficiency on the motive force which lies behind it. If that be right, the machinery suitable to it will in time be produced by natural means. Though men do not commonly realize it, each new stage of society is an experiment, an adventure, and safety can only be secured, not by returning to the paths already forsaken, but by adapting a developing spiritual life to the needs and conditions of the new discovery. Such a state of affairs as that which confronted Amos is the result of a growth in the externals of social and political life with which the soul of the community has failed to keep pace. As Hosea put it a generation later, "Ephraim was a cake not turned"—cooked on one side and raw on the other. The true cure was not to attempt a reversion to a more elementary society—as the Nazirite and the Rechabite strove to do—but to apply to the new order the spiritual and moral principles which had made for the highest success in the old.

It is in the appreciation of this truth that the real greatness of Amos lies. He did not denounce the system as a system; he said that it must be worked on principles which Israel had already received from Yahweh in the desert. The supreme failure was not that Israel had learnt to plough and Samaria to trade, but that neither had seen that Yahweh was concerned in both activities. In the desert the highest religious and ethical conduct might consist in offering the first-born, in sacrificing the Passover, in bringing tithes, in not seething a kid in its mother's milk, in observing the elementary laws of property, and in maintaining the obligations of blood-relationship. These things were not wrong in themselves, but, unless supplemented by something more, they were quite inadequate to the conditions of Palestine. They were expressions of principles, natural and suitable enough to the nomadic life; these same principles must be crystallised out of that life, and redissolved in conduct which would make it possible to apply them to the market and the farm.

First and foremost amongst those principles is the truth of the universality of Yahweh. This is not necessarily monotheism, though it must in time develop into monotheism. But men are slow to realize the implications and logical results of their own

views, and it may well be that many years must pass before Israel could attain to the more finished theological and philosophical doctrine of a single God. But Amos certainly did proclaim the truth that Yahweh is supreme. He mentions other gods, but always with a certain contempt. Real or not, they were inferior, and Israel should have nothing to do with them. On the other hand, Yahweh had made the whole world. He had set the heavenly bodies in their orbits, and still controlled their movements. The expanse of earth and the dome of heaven were alike the products of His activity. All human history, too, was the outcome of His will. He was interested in Israel, it is true, but He was equally concerned with other nations. Even the great racial migrations were undertaken at His behest, though those most concerned in them might be ignorant of the fact. Still more did He appear as the vindicator of universal moral laws. He would punish the neighbouring tribes, not merely as the patriot-God, for wrongs done to Israel, but for crimes which violated the natural laws of humanity, whoever the victims might be. His special relationship to His own people meant, not privileges to do wrong, but responsibility to do right. It was Israel who must adapt herself to this conception of a universal moral law, not Yahweh who must consider first the material advantage of Israel. If she failed here—and this is the real essence of the teaching of Amos—she lost her only *raison d'être,* and, so far from protecting her, Yahweh would Himself ordain her ruin. Every nation, every sphere of life was subject to these supreme laws, and the real function of Israel amongst the civilized peoples of the world was to work them out in common life. Sacrifice, as compared with this, was insignificant, and without it a mockery. Religion consists of getting into touch with God, and it is impossible to get into touch with a God who is supreme righteousness without at least making righteousness an essential element in the religious ideal.

Nowhere does the contrast between Amos and his contemporaries appear more strongly than in his conception of the Day of Yahweh. Israel was looking for some final and supernatural revelation of her God in power, when He should overthrow her enemies and give her all that her heart could desire. To Amos also the Day was to be a revelation. But it was a revelation of Yahweh as God of Righteousness, not necessarily as God of Israel. And in so far as Israel failed to reach the standard of righteousness, it was to be a day of calamity for her. She would find herself hurried from one danger into another, till the final stroke fell upon her from which there was no recovery. Thus would Yahweh be vindicated, once and for all, by the destruction of the very people whom He had chosen to be His instruments in making Him known to the world. Samaria's one hope was to

give the moral character of Yahweh its place in her social and religious life. That chance she would not take, and though the fatal blow was withheld for a generation, it fell in the end as surely as the autumn followed the summer and the summer the spring.

Few ages have needed the warning and substance of the message of Amos more than our own. In the course of the last century we have passed from the agricultural stage of society into the industrial one. No thoughtful man to-day can regard the position of society with equanimity. On every hand we are being asked whether the Church really has a message for the times, and the answer is too often in the negative. As a matter of fact, there is no message for the times except that which the Church has to give—or ought to have. There are those who would say that the whole system is wrong, so utterly wrong that there is nothing for it but to crush it to powder and to mix therefrom a clay with which a new order can be built up. But it is never the system that is wrong in the last resort. It may be very far from being right, but at worst it is a symptom and not the disease itself. We have the cure in our own hands—the one thing the Church has had to offer the world since she first came into being, "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." As with Amos, so with us, the principles are eternal; what is needed is a new application of them. As ever, we have but one thing to proclaim, "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." But it may well be that we need a fresh insight into this truth, a more ample social and moral interpretation of it. A statement of the implications of the Cross which could work without disaster in a simpler social stage may be calamitous in a more complex economic order unless expounded afresh to meet the new conditions. To-day's political, economic, and industrial chaos may be the last struggle of a perishing civilization to maintain its existence, or it may be the birth-throes of a nobler age. In large measure the decision as between these alternatives lies with the Church. Nothing can save the world but Christ, and the question which Amos brings before us is whether we, who claim his name, can bring His healing and saving power to bear upon our sick and dying age. If we can, the flowers of life will once more bloom to fruit; if we cannot, the end is sure, and the tree of human society must break out again below the broken, withered branch into new, God-given life.

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