

AMOS

Rev. E. W. Tink

The author of the book of Amos was a layman taken from among the herdsmen of Tekoa. He began his prophetic career about 760 B. C. He fixes the date as being two years before the earthquake. He was born at Tekoa, ten miles from Jerusalem. Tekoa was situated on an eminence 2700 feet high which overlooked the wilderness of Judah. The very ruggedness and grandeur of his outlook would be a physical asset in producing a prophet and a seer. With his home in Judah, he was called to be a missionary to northern Israel. We have no record of any period of preparation—but that Amos was prepared, the written prophecies give ample evidence. We remember the wise woman from Tekoa whom Joab fetched to effect the reconciliation between David and Absalom, and perhaps Amos had received special training from wise men and women still dwelling in Tekoa. He speaks of himself as a dresser of sycamore trees. He had acquired a knowledge of Jehovah and an intimate acquaintance of the history of his people. Perhaps as a wool merchant or a flock master he had visited the various market places where people gathered. Talent develops in solitude, character in the stream of life. So Amos had received physical and mental preparation for his work, when God called him to the prophetic office. Amos emphasizes the righteousness of Jehovah. "Let righteousness flow down like a perennial stream." In assuming divine world government, he was one with Isaiah and Daniel. The God of Amos is the God of the world. And God's standard of judgment is that the measure of light shall be the measure of responsibility.

The outlook of Amos is wider than that of the other prophets. He never uses the phrase so common to other prophets, "God of Israel." This is a most significant omission. True, the sound of Jehovah's voice soars over Jerusalem, but he is speaking to neighboring nations. Amos does not affirm or argue but assumes that Jehovah is the supreme world Ruler. The charge against the nations is that of cruelty, oppression and vindictiveness. The charge against Israel is most severe for, in addition to oppression, they have despised the law of God. Greater light and privileges, mean greater responsibilities.

Notice that Amos begins where Joel ends, in the judgment of heathen nations. He first pronounces judgment against Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Ammon and Moab. To each of these burdens the people of Israel would say: "Amen." Then the prophet deals with Judah. He is coming nearer home. Suddenly he turns upon Israel and offers no quarter.

The prophet assumes the role of prosecutor on behalf of the Almighty. He asks four questions. Can two walk together except they be agreed? God and Israel have come to the parting of the ways. "Can a bird fall upon the earth and there be no snare? Can the trumpet blow its warning blast and the people not be afraid? Shall the lion roar if he have taken no prey? He is declaring that there is ample cause for prophetic warning; there is a cause for every effect, the curse causeless shall not come.

The women of Samaria are likened to a herd of cows breaking into and over a field of corn, trampling under foot and spoiling what

they do not devour. There is no surer sign of the downfall of a nation than the degradation of her womanhood.

He addresses two classes of sinners, those who are recklessly at ease in Zion, and those who put far away the evil day. They correspond to those in our day who sleep in cushioned pews in smug complacency, guiltless of agony of soul for a lost world, or saying to themselves, "the world is getting better every day, in every way. Tomorrow shall be as today, only more abundant," or "Where is the promise of His coming for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

Note the bow of promise in the closing message. "I will lift the house of Israel, I will raise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down, I will build, I will bring, I will plant them in the land which I have given."—Heart and Life Bulletin.

HOLINESS A HOBBY

"I do not believe," said a friend to us a little time since, "in making holiness a hobby."

What is a "hobby," we inquired. Our friend did not seem to understand very clearly the meaning of the word. It was, however, a very objectionable way of doing things.

"Mr. Webster," we said, "who is very good authority defines *hobby* to be a *favorite pursuit*."

Pressing the question a little, we inquired, "Ought the highest attainments in the Christian life to be a *favorite pursuit* or should it be made secondary? Do you not make your business a favorite pursuit?" Our friend confessed he did. "Then, you are a *hobbyist*, are you not? You think it very wise and proper to make a hobby of your business, that you may get wealth, but not of religion, that you may become holy. How does that look in the light of the comparative value and importance of the two interests? At this point our friend was inclined to change the subject of conversation.

To make a minister or a church member odious in the eyes of a majority of professed Christians, it is only necessary to report that he is a *hobbyist* on the subject of holiness. This is sufficient to place him beyond the pale of church sympathy. If he is a minister, it is only necessary to have it known that his chief object is to persuade people to be holy to have the doors of one-half of the churches closed against him. They will endure that he believe the doctrine provided he makes no special efforts to get the people into the experience. They are like the man who was in favor of the liquor law, but against its enforcement.

Mr. Wesley's method would not suit such people. Writing to one of his members he says, "Entire salvation from inbred sin can hardly ever be insisted upon, either in preaching or prayer, without a particular blessing. Honest Isaac Brown firmly believes this doctrine, that we are to be saved from all sin in this life. But I wish, when opportunity serves, you would encourage him; 1, To preach Christian perfection constantly, strongly, and explicitly. 2, Explicitly to assert and prove that it may be received now: and 3 (which indeed is implied therein, That it is to be received by simple faith."

If there were more of these honest Isaac Browns in the Church, and more who would encourage them to preach "Christian perfection constantly, strongly and explicitly," we should witness a different state of things in all the churches. But let none be deterred from doing

their whole duty by the cry of "hobby." That cry indicates the greater need of pressing the subject.—Tract by Wm. McDonald.

THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

The religion of Jesus Christ makes the soul happy. It takes away the stings of conscience and brings abiding peace to the soul.

One of the happiest mortals we ever met was an old washerwoman in Maryland. We were well acquainted with her for years, as she belonged to the same society as we did for a period. Later we became her pastor. And for years afterward met her occasionally, as she lived within a few miles of our old home.

She had a drunkard for a husband who probably did not draw a sober breath for twenty years. She had several children, but because of the drunken condition of her husband, they were not well-balanced mentally. As they grew up they gave her much trouble because of their wickedness. The family lived in a log house on a back street of the town. There was but one room to the building, except a rude loft, access to which was by a ladder, and which was the sleeping quarters of the family. This dear old saint washed and ironed six days of every week to support the family. She was about sixty-five years of age when we first became acquainted with her.

She was a faithful attendant at all the services of the church, and because of her intense spirituality was an inspiration to the pastor and others. No inclement weather could keep her from church. Although she lived but about three blocks from the house of God, at times because of her weariness she would be compelled to sit down on some doorstep two or three times on her way to the place of worship.

Yet with all her severe trials, her poverty, her weariness, we never heard her give a note of discouragement in her testimony, but it was always of a victorious character and full of praises to the Lord.

Part of the time that we were a member of the society we were the class collector, receiving the money from the members for the pastor. Regularly every Tuesday night she would place a quarter in our hand and almost cry because she had no more to give. She could neither read nor write, but she had a small Bible which she kept under her pillow every night. No Christian could visit her without her getting the Bible and asking him to read and pray before he departed. Needless to say, everyone who knew her had confidence in Aunty Lockard's piety.

Surely the religion of Jesus Christ will make people happy, even in the midst of the adverse circumstances and severe afflictions of life.—

—Free Methodist.

THE FIRST EASTER

Oh, the glorious Easter morning
When Jesus came forth from the tomb.
He came in the early dawning,
Dispelling the midnight gloom.
To Mary, He gave the message
To tell to the sorrowing men;
How the grave could no longer hold Him,
She told it again and again.
She told it to the disciples,
Yes, she told it to Peter and John.
Then hastened to tell it to others
Her sorrows and tears were all gone.
And we too, can tell the glad story,
How Jesus came forth from the tomb,
That He came in the early morning
Dispelling the midnight gloom.

Mrs. Wm. Stanley.