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THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROPHECIES

OPINION OF GULEBUS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1953

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. AMOS: PROPHET OF RIGHTEOUSNESS	5
Insufficiency of Ceremonial Worship	5
Yahweh's Rejection of Israel's Sacrifices	10
Futility of Israel's Use of Sacrifice	19
Allusions to a Fertility Cult	22
Conclusion	25
III. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE	29
Rejection of Israel's Fertility Cult	29
Insufficiency of Israel's Sacrifices	38
Rejection of Israel's Idolatry	47
Conclusion	49
IV. MICAH: PROPHET OF JUSTICE	53
Insufficiency of Sacrifice	53
Allusions to the Cultus of Judah and Israel	64
Conclusion	71
V. CONCLUSION	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	76

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years Old Testament scholars of the higher critical school generally assumed that a tension between prophet and priest existed in Israel. As this factor in the Hebrew religion was studied more closely, it became evident that this assumption had to be modified.¹

The eighth-century prophets in particular were cited in proof of this prophetic-priestly rivalry. Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah were thought by some to have advocated a complete abolition of the sacrificial cultus. This interpretation of the eighth-century prophets has been more extensively questioned in recent decades. It is of interest to note in passing that quite often the personal religious beliefs of the scholars seem to have influenced their interpretations; those of liturgical communions were generally of the opinion that the prophets did not denounce cultus per se;² those of non-liturgical communions often were of the opposite opinion.

It is the purpose of this essay to study the various interpretations of the three eighth-century prophets, Amos, Hosea, Micah, in an effort to determine their attitude toward cultus. In particular the present study will direct itself to the question, "Did these men advocate the complete abolition of sacrifice?" This will of necessity include a consideration of

¹Many, swinging to the other extreme, believe the prophets to have been a regular part of the cultic personnel. See A. S. Johnson, "The Prophet in Israelite Worship," The Expository Times, XLVII (April, 1936), pp. 312-319; and Ernst Würthwein, "Amos 5, 21-27," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXII (September, 1947), pp. 143-152.

²James E. Coleran, "The Prophets and Sacrifice," Theological Studies, V (December, 1949), p. 411.

the extent to which each prophet has made his position clear. In certain areas the prophets have spoken clearly, in others their attitudes may be inferred. On some points it appears that no tenable conclusions can be drawn.

Each prophet will be studied individually. The presentation in each chapter will be based on the two or three most important passages from that prophet. Other pertinent passages will be discussed as they relate to these primary texts.

In the interpretation of a given text, there are three primary considerations outside the passage itself which must be taken into account. First, both the immediate and the wider context must be studied. It appears that all too often scholars have made sweeping statements by divorcing a text from its context, or indeed, denying the text's authenticity. In this connection the records of the historical books of the Old Testament will prove helpful.

Secondly, as far as is possible, the people's religious attitudes and thought should be determined. This is a difficult task. In some areas no final conclusions can be drawn. In addition, the picture is confused by the fact that there were obviously different trends of thought in the minds of those among whom the prophets labored.

Another important matter is the fundamental purpose of each prophecy and the peculiar emphasis of each prophet. These three are tightly entwined, the context, the people's attitudes, and the prophet's purpose. This essay will present some of the more important lines which Old Testament scholars have followed in untangling these and thereby discovering the prophets' attitude toward cultus.

"Das Amt des Propheten ist das Bussamt. Darin sind sich alle Propheten einig."³ This dictum is certainly true of Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Yet each was a unique individual. Each had a peculiar undergirding motif which determined the form of his entire prophecy. Still these three were alike in that they all called for repentance and a return to Yahweh.

Amos was called from his flocks in Judah to champion in particular the cause of the needy and oppressed in the northern kingdom, ca. 750 B. C. He denounced the rich and ruling class for forsaking Yahweh and for their practical atheism. While grinding the poor into the dust, they felt secure; Yahweh was little concerned with their morality. Hence Amos' prophecies are largely of an ethical and social nature. He treated cultus chiefly because the people had substituted it for the righteousness which Yahweh demanded and because they defended themselves and their actions on the basis of their cultus.

Hosea, on the other hand, discussed cultus in detail. He attacked these same people of the northern kingdom, perhaps some ten or twenty years later, because they had forsaken Yahweh. Hosea saw this defection exemplified in the Israelite worship of false gods, Baalim, and their use of the corresponding fertility-cult patterns of worship and life. Hence by the nature of the case, Hosea attacked the cultus of Israel very directly. It is from him that we have the most reliable picture of the cultus as it existed in the later years of the northern kingdom. To the modern mind Hosea appears to have gotten to the root of the matter. He attacked the cause, Amos the

³Paul Vols, Propheten gestalten des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1949), p. 228.

external symptoms of the trouble. In defense of Amos it should be said that the ancient Semitic mind "fastened on the outward acts as revealing the inner state, while the modern mind goes directly to the internal situation."⁴

Micah prophesied to the kingdom of Judah during the final third of the eighth century B. C. Very much like Amos, he was a defender of the poor and in particular the rural population over against the city population. He condemned the priests, prophets, rich and rulers alike for their mercenary and oppressive practices, which indicated their defection from Yahweh. Those prophecies of Micah which deal with cultus are considered unauthentic by many. There is only one truly important passage, 6:6-8. Here Micah pictured a repentant Israelite who sought to receive forgiveness and Yahweh's favor by a zealous use of cultus. Micah's mention of cultus is therefore almost incidental to his message.

⁴G. A. Cooke, "The Book of Ezekiel Volume I," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 199.

CHAPTER II

AMOS: PROPHET OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Insufficiency of Ceremonial Worship

Chapter five is the cornerstone of Amos' prophecy. In it he presents his two main messages, the imminence of the destructive day of the Lord and the call to a penitent return to Yahweh, which will manifest itself in ethical and moral activity on every level of life. It is significant that the most important passages bearing on Amos' attitude toward cultus should also be in this chapter. The first is contained in vv. 4-5 and its forceful parallel, vv. 14-15.

For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel,
Seek ye me, and ye shall live.

But seek not Bethel,
nor enter into Gilgal,
and pass not to Beersheba,
for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
and Bethel shall come to nought.¹

Seek good, and not evil,
that ye may live;
and so the LORD, the God of hosts,
shall be with you, as ye have spoken.
Hate the evil, and love the good,
and establish judgment in the gate;
it may be that the Lord GOD of hosts
will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.²

To seek, לָּוַךְ , is the regular verb of going to a shrine,³ of con-

¹5:4-5. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from the AV. The versification is from Julius A. Bewer, "The book of the Twelve Prophets Volume I," Harper's Annotated Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949).

²5:14-15.

³W. Robertson Smith, The Prophets of Israel and their Place in History to the close of the eighth century B. C. (Second edition; London: A. & C. Black, 1928), pp. 138-139.

sulting an oracle from a prophet there, or of seeking God in the sense of trying to please Him in a general way, through true worship or some sort of activity.⁴ Amos plays on the two meanings, urging the Israelites to come to know Yahweh and have fellowship with Him, that is, to seek Him, but not to resort to the shrines.⁵ Verses 14-15 indicate that this fellowship was to be found in ethical and social morality, and in an observance of God's laws. Verse 15 shows that this was more than an external action, for to love the good was an abiding direction of the will, from which the external actions spring. This entire activity, however, was centered in God.⁶

Bethel and Gilgal were the two most prominent shrines in Israel, Bethel being the royal shrine.⁷ Beersheba is a curious notice, lying far to the south in Judah. These sanctuaries were closely connected with the history of Israel,⁸ and having witnessed sacrifice long before Amos' day were considered proper sanctuaries.

The sharp contrast between the sanctuaries and God-pleasing service,

⁴Richard S. Cripps, Commentary on the book of Amos (London: SPOK, 1929), p. 180.

⁵Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Witten-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 116.

⁶Arthur Weiser, "Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten I," Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), XXIV, 140.

77:13.

⁸Beersheba, Gen. 26:25-33; Bethel, Gen. 28:10 ff; Gilgal, I Sam. 10:8, 11:14, II Kings 4:38.

and the command not to seek the shrines, has been interpreted as an absolute condemnation of cultus. Paul Volz,⁹ the most outspoken critic of this school, considers this to be an example of the view that was held from Moses' time to the prophet's, namely, that sacrifice and cultic ritual had no part in the true religion of Yahweh.

Inner [17] wieder stellt sich etwas zwischen Gott und Mensch: Priester, Altar, Amulett, Werkerei; die Prophetie des Alten Testaments hat der ganzen Menschheit den Dienst geleistet, dass sie das Widereöttliche dieser Zwischendinge im Grundsatz aufgedeckt und diese Hindernisse im Grundsatz beseitigt hat.¹⁰

No one agrees in toto to this view, but not a few agree that Amos was the first to advocate a religion that had no place for cultus.

Amos brought ". . . ein neues Ideal des Lebens und damit des Gottesreichs: . . . Nicht an den Heiligthümern, an denen man Gott sucht, und in dem Kulte, in dem man ihn dient, ist er zu finden; er ist nur zu finden und ihm ist nur zu dienen in sittlicher Betätigung, in Guten, in der Gerechtigkeit."¹¹

"For Amos the demands of Yahweh are of an exclusively moral and spiritual order."¹² God was a moral being and so above being influenced by sacrifice. He must be reached by moral means; it was a matter of obedience rather than

⁹Paul Volz, Propheten Gestalten des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1949), passim.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 16-17.

¹¹Ernst Sellin, Der Alttestamentliche Prophetismus (Leipzig: A. Reichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912), p. 33.

¹²Adolphe Lods, The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, translated by S. H. Hooks (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937), p. 85.

placation.¹³

These verses may, however, refer only to the improper worship which took place at these sanctuaries. Oesterley¹⁴ has observed that if Amos ever had an opportunity to inveigh against sacrificial worship, it was while he was at the sanctuary in Bethel. Yet in 7:10, while at the sanctuary, Amos prophesies only against the king, not the worship. In this connection Smith writes:

To Amos, Jerusalem was the most important of all the places where Jehovah could be worshipped (see Nowack), and this is all that the verse need imply.¹⁵

Later he adds,

The prophet, we presume, is thinking of the pure 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 roars.¹⁶

This latter reference is to 1:2, where Amos prefaces his prophecy with the statement that these words are those of the Lord who roars from Jerusalem. This verse has been considered a later addition dependant on Joel,¹⁷ or an original part of Amos' prophecy.¹⁸ Certainly those who deny that Amos would

¹³Elmer A. Leslie, Old Testament Religion in the Light of Its Canaanite Background (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1934), p. 172.

¹⁴W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel (New York: The Macmillan Co., n.d.), p. 194.

¹⁵Norman H. Smith, The Book of Amos (London: The Spworth Press, 1945), II, 10.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁷William Rainey Harper, "Amos and Hosea," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 10.

¹⁸Van Hoonacker, quoted by Crips, op. cit., p. 115.

have allowed any cultus must consider this passage ungenune, for the name Zion could hardly not include a connotation of the purer cultus used there.

While the thought of worship in Jerusalem may be in this Judean prophet's mind, a better understanding is gained by noting the context. This oracle is an answer to the people's contention that the Day of Yahweh cannot be destruction to them because they are zealously worshipping Yahweh.¹⁹ In such a polemical situation, it would be natural for Amos to resort to a decisive either-or to point up the truth that Yahweh desired more than mere sacrifice, namely, obedience. Such a use of hyperbole is often referred to by commentators in connection with the eighth-century prophets.

H. W. Robinson²⁰ discovers a similarity between the symbolic acts of the prophets and sacrifices. They both stem from the Semitic attitude which conceives of the outward acts as the expression of the inner movement.

If ritual and righteousness were separated, and a choice had to be made between them, there can be no doubt as to their choice; "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." From this standpoint they unhesitatingly condemned the religiosity of their times. But statements made in religious controversy are always likely to be coloured by what they oppose and deny as well as by what they uphold and assent. The prophets were virtually compelled to over-emphasise, or to emphasise too exclusively, one side of the ritual-righteousness antithesis, in order to make their meaning clear — to say, in effect, righteousness only, in order to say, not ritual only. It would be difficult to conceive the maintenance of Israelite worship at all, which the prophets certainly contemplated and desired, without some sort of sacrifice.²¹

¹⁹Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

²⁰H. W. Robinson, "Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism," The Journal of Theological Studies, XLIII (1942), 137.

²¹*Idem. cit.*

These musical terms have no particular religious connotation. All this Yahweh denounced and refused to accept. The verbs are heaped up to show His utter disdain of their valueless cultus.

Instead, Amos, with majestic simplicity, encourages justice and righteousness. וְצִדִיק , is the true justice based on God's laws and commandments, as well as the decisions handed down by the judges. Justice is more than a social, man-to-man relationship. He also demands סְדִיקָה just acts, but in addition, a benevolence toward the needy fellow-man,²⁷ which ultimately stems from a theocentric attitude. Amos applies these terms particularly to the social situation, for to him the prime evidence of the people's apostasy from Yahweh was their behavior toward their fellow-men. In 5:7 he had condemned them for "turning judgment to wormwood, and casting down righteousness." A word of caution is in order, however, against those who interpreted Amos in the light of the "social gospel."

A great deal of nonsense has been written about the eighth-century prophets as social revolutionaries. Now there can be no doubt that Amos and Hosea . . . were social reformers . . . but to stamp them as precursors of the twentieth century advocates of socialism or communism is decidedly exaggerated . . . they were first and last religious reformers.²⁸

These verses are in keeping with the rest of Amos' prophecy, not a kind word for cultus, but a continual denunciation of the people's immoral lives.

²⁷Norman H. Smith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 75, 86, 90, 97.

²⁸W. F. Albright, "The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew Prophets of the 8th Century," The Journal of Bible and Religion, VII (August, 1940), 135.

This juxtaposition has often been advanced as evidence that Amos would allow no cultus. Nowhere does Amos explicitly denounce the use of the cultus, though that can be inferred. It appears that in this case, this inference gives the proper interpretation.

The first four verbs in v. 21 should be interpreted as a unit, either relatively, or absolutely. In themselves, the first two, hate and despise, are absolute, while the latter two, accept and regard, are relative. While those who feel that Amos denounced cultus per se read all in the absolute sense, Würtwein²⁹ thinks that the latter two soften the former verbs.

ST $\frac{7}{7}$. to accept, delight in, is often³⁰ used as the terminus technicus to indicate whether or not a given sacrifice was acceptable to God. He takes this use here and considers this to weaken the force of the passage to mean that God would not accept these sacrifices. He also places this entire oracle in the framework of the "prophetic cultic oracle."³¹ According to this theory, there were in Israel cultic prophets, men who were consulted at the shrines and announced to the worshippers whether or not their sacrifices were accepted by the deity. Johnson³² lists quite a few examples of this in defense of this theory, in which prophets were connected with the shrines after the order of the prophets of Baal.³³ That Amos was such a

²⁹Ernst Würtwein, "Amos 5:21-27," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXII (September, 1947), 146-147.

³⁰I Sam. 26:19; II Sam. 24:23; Mal. 1:8-10.

³¹Württemberg, op. cit., p. 149.

³²A. H. Johnson, "The Prophet in Israelite Worship," The Expository Times, XLVII (April, 1936), 312-314.

³³Ibid., p. 315; see also I Kings 18, Elijah's contest with these prophets.

cultic prophet is virtually impossible, but that his message may have been viewed in such a light is at least possible.

The stress which Amos places on the suffix "your" is to be noted.³⁴ Its repetition indicates that Amos is speaking in a given situation, not laying down an absolute law.

Lattey³⁵ discusses the Hebrew usage which used a negative in a relative sense for emphasis. He quotes several New and Old Testament passages where this usage continued. Christ says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endures."³⁶ He mentions also Joel, "rend your hearts and not your garments."³⁷ Certainly neither of these is to be taken at its face value, for working for food or rending garments is not absolutely wrong. In keeping with this idiom, the meaning here and elsewhere in the minor prophets, "Do not sacrifice" can well mean a strong "Do not only sacrifice."

Furthermore, if sacrifices are absolutely condemned, then so must the songs, music, assemblies, harmless enough in themselves, be considered condemned in se.³⁸

Those who belittle sacrificial religion because of the words of the prophets would, if they were consistent, belittle not only priest and sacrifice, but ruler, wise-man, prophet, (1) temple, covenant, religious assemblies, Sabbath, and even prayer. For these likewise fall under

³⁴Wirthwein, *op. cit.*, p. 148; Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

³⁵Lattey, "The Prophets and Sacrifices: A Study in Biblical Relativity," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XLII (1941), 155-165.

³⁶John 6:27.

³⁷Joel 2:13.

³⁸Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 193

condemnation insofar as, as often as, the spirit and disposition behind them were false. The positive aim of the prophetic preaching taken in the background of their times gives the key to their negative statements. To concentrate one's attention on the negative statements alone is to destroy their teaching.³⁹

Hence we may conclude that the problem lay not with the worship, but with the worshippers.

Das Volk . . . ist gottlos durch seine Sünde von Gott geschieden und darum heillos. Diese von Gott verhängte Heillosigkeit ist es im letzten Grunde, die den Kult sinnlos macht.⁴⁰

Smith⁴¹ and Coleran⁴² consider these verses as a condemnation only of the cultus of the northern shrines, which no less than twenty years later, in Hosca's time, was marked by fertility-cult rites.

The crux of the interpretation of Amos' attitude is verse 25. Every interpretation finally depends upon the interpretation of this verse.

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?⁴³

𐤀 𐤁 𐤁 𐤁 and 𐤀 𐤁 𐤁 𐤁 cover the general idea of sacrificial offering, the former indicating bloody, and the latter unbloody sacrifices.⁴⁴ The

³⁹James H. Coleran, "The Prophets and Sacrifice," Theological Studies, V (December, 1944), 438.

⁴⁰Wirthwein, op. cit., p. 148.

⁴¹Smith, op. cit., p. 147.

⁴²Coleran, op. cit., p. 424.

⁴³5:25.

⁴⁴Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 401.

use of the interrogative particle does not give any sure direction to the interpretation.

The particle si stands primarily before the simple question when the questioner is wholly uncertain as to the answer to be expected . . . in other cases si (= si?) is used before questions, to which, from their tone and contents, a negative answer is expected.⁴⁵

In this case the answer "no" would seem to be the more obvious, for to answer "yes" requires a deeper reflection upon Amos' thought. The implication of a total "no" would be that since the fathers did not sacrifice, it was not necessary for the present Israelites to sacrifice. Amos may have been incorrect, but he seems to believe that there was no sacrifice in the wilderness.⁴⁶ Gripps suggests a milder interpretation:

The fact was that in the wilderness wanderings the Israelites had little opportunity for sacrifice. 340 . . . Moreover, the law received at Sinai concerning sacrifice (like many others) had to wait for its observance until the people arrived in the land.⁴⁷

In either case, as Gripps notes, such an absolute statement by Amos could be easily refuted by his hearers by reference to the Pentateuch.

It is, indeed, remarkable that Amos and Jeremiah claim to have had knowledge of an early non-use of sacrifice, in face of the facts that (a) all Semitic nations offered it, and (b) in Israel itself for centuries before the time of Amos, it seems to have provided the normal method of approach to God, as the history of the sacrifices of Samuel and Elijah is sufficient to show.⁴⁸

This is a concise outline of the difficulties attaching to an interpretation

⁴⁵Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, edited and enlarged by E. Kautsch, 2nd revised English edition by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1910), section 150d.

⁴⁶Smith, op. cit., p. 69.

⁴⁷Gripps, op. cit., pp. 339-340.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 340.

which considers Amos to have believed there was no sacrifice in the time of the wilderness wanderings. While Amos does not explicitly condemn only the abuse of sacrifice here,⁴⁹ it appears that such an interpretation must be sought to meet the above difficulties.

The γ β , to me, has been viewed as an indication that the wilderness sacrifice was to idols, or false Gods.⁵⁰ The final position of the proposition does not place such a great stress upon it, however. Oesterley considers the sincerity with which the offerings were given to be the point of comparison.

An affirmative answer is expected and the ". . . meaning is this: Did not your forefathers offer me sacrifices which were acceptable because they were offered in faithfulness and sincerity? The implication being: Why, then do you offer sacrifices which, on account of your sins, and on account of your false ideas about your God Yahveh, are worthless and unacceptable."⁵¹

Jellicoe⁵² also believes the point to be the disloyalty and insincerity of the people, but considers Amos' view to be that the present Israelites continue in the disloyalty of the Israelites in the wilderness. He also raises the interesting question, if there was a tradition of no sacrifice in the wilderness, why did not Hosea allude to it, for it would have supported his message well?

Harper would answer, "Sacrifice, to be sure, but also something else,

⁴⁹Smith, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁰Norman H. Smith, *The Book of Amos* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), II, 100.

⁵¹Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁵²Sidney Jellicoe, "The Prophets and the Cultus," *The Expository Times*, LX (June, 1949), 257.

vis., 'True worship of the heart and righteousness, public and private.'⁵³

One of the most tempting explanations has been proposed by Van Hoonacker,⁵⁴ who ties this verse to v. 27, and expects the affirmative answer. Amos implies then, that just as sacrifice in the wilderness did not avert the 40 years' wandering, so present sacrifice would not save the people from certain captivity. Wüthwein⁵⁵ follows Stade in removing this verse as a scribal gloss in the margin.

These and all other interpretations finally narrow into one or the other; either Amos is trying to say absolutely that sacrifice is unnecessary or wrong, or he is saying that these sacrifices of the people of Israel are of no value. The burden of proof lies with the latter interpretation.

The following verses, 26-27, are in a position to aid in the previous interpretations, but unfortunately, are much darker and difficult than the previous verses.

'You shall take up Siccuth your king, and Chiun your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves; Therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus,' says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.⁵⁶

This translation departs from the AV, and follows the word order of the LXX, but represents a fair consensus of the commentators. Siccuth and Chiun (AV) both have the pointing of $\text{Y}^{\text{h}} \text{P} \text{U}^{\text{h}}$, abomination, which the Massoretes

⁵³Harper, op. cit., p. 136.

⁵⁴Quoted by Colerain, op. cit., p. 424.

⁵⁵Wüthwein, op. cit., p. 150.

⁵⁶26-27, RSV.

regularly substituted for names of idols.⁵⁷

Sakkuth, the proper name of the war God Adar-Malek ('king') - Saturn, otherwise known as Nimurta ('Ninib'). The words [200] 'your king' (1) probably allude to the royal title of the god, whose name Adrammelech ('Adar is king') occurs in 2 Ki. xvii. 31; or (2) they may refer to the king of Israel in king-('Moloch') worship. The syncretized worship would thus be of Sakkuth-Moloch. (3) The LXX saw a reference to the Ammonite (?) god Holoch ('the tabernacle of Moloch'). Chium; or rather, Kaiwan, appears to be another name for the same god, which reference especially to the planet Saturn.⁵⁸

These names are often connected with Babylonian or Assyrian astral gods;

Salma, the term cognate to $\square \text{ ? } \text{Y}$, image, is found in their astronomic vocabulary where it is used of the astral bodies pictured in human form.⁵⁹

For such reasons⁶⁰ some consider v.26 a later insertion.⁶¹ Robertson Smith translates "Shrines of your (idol) king and the stand of your images."⁶²

Finally, the tense is the controlling factor. Most commentators consider $\text{H} \text{S} \text{S} \text{H} \text{Y}$ to be future, "you will take up the idols when you go into captivity."⁶³ Others take the reference to be to present cultic

⁵⁷Snaitch, op. cit., II, p. 107.

⁵⁸Gripps, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

⁵⁹E. A. Speiser, "Note on Amos 5:26," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Number 108 (December, 1947), 6.

⁶⁰Casterley, op. cit., p. 195.

⁶¹Wirthwein, op. cit., p. 151.

⁶²W. R. Smith, op. cit., p. 402.

⁶³Snaitch, op. cit., II, 106; Coleran, op. cit., p. 423.

processions involving a form of idolatry.⁶⁴ A few consider it a reference to the idolatry in the wilderness.⁶⁵ This would imply that the Israelites' present worship was to Amos also idolatrous.

One of the earliest commentators on this passage appears to be St. Stephen, Martyr. In Acts 7:41-45 he quotes the LXX and attributes this worship to the wilderness; because they made an idol, God handed them over to the worship of astral deities.

In the face of such diverse opinion, only two items can be stated with certainty. At some time or other in Israel's history this idolatry took place, and Amos connects this defection from Yahweh with the coming captivity. If anything more can be said, the weight tends toward the opinion that the previous verses (21-25) also deal with a worship that is corrupt, not with worship alone.

Futility of Israel's Use of Sacrifice

The cultus was used by the people in such a way as to vitiate any value it might have had. Amos sarcastically advises a full use of the cult in the bitter words:

Come to Bethel, and transgress;
 at Gilgal multiply transgressions
 and bring your sacrifices every morning,
 and your tithes after three years.
 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven,
 and proclaim and publish the free offerings,
 for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁶⁵See W. R. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-403 for a good survey of the proposed and possible interpretations.

⁶⁶4:4-5.

The phrase "every morning" is translated literally, "in the morning."

י וּלְמִנְחָתוֹ וְלֶחֶם אֲפֵקִים may be either the וּלְמִנְחָתוֹ partitive, with leaven, or privative, without leaven.⁶⁷ The mention of "tithes every three years" (days= Mass.) has been taken variously: (1) on the third day of the feast, according to the custom of bringing the tithes on the third day of the feast, which has no support outside this passage,⁶⁸ (2) on the three days of the year, barley at Unleavened Bread, wheat at the Feast of Weeks, and wine and the rest of the produce at the Feast of the Ingathering,⁶⁹ (3) each third year.⁷⁰ To publish the offerings would be totally opposed to the proper spirit of sacrifice, and is the culmination of Amos' sarcasm. Thus, coming to the sanctuary would not help them, for there they sinned.

Again this has been taken to indicate that to go to a sanctuary was itself sinful; all cult was foreign to Yahweh. Coleran⁷¹ sees Amos here denouncing the Canaanite rites practiced at Bethel and Gilgal. The primary sense seems to be not that their coming to the sanctuary was sinful, nor the fact that they sacrificed, but the stress and value they placed on sacrifice was improper.

This stress can be interpreted in one of two ways: (1) they aimed at an abundant sacrifice⁷² and so tried to storm God by sheer weight of sacrifice, or (2) they aimed at a very careful observance of the ritual regulations

⁶⁷Theodore H. Robinson, *The Book of Amos* (London: SPOK, 1923), p. 24.

⁶⁸Cripps, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁶⁹Smith, *op. cit.*, II, 72.

⁷⁰Deut. 14:28.

⁷¹Coleran, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

⁷²Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

that they might bind God to aid them.⁷³ whichever sense is taken, it is obvious that Amos primarily is objecting to their over-evaluation of the scope of sacrifice. It was no substitute for the proper relationship with fellow-men and God. In such a situation, where they did not have the proper relationship with God, sacrifice was of no avail, in point of fact, a transgression. More than this cannot be deduced of the basis of this passage.

It is significant that this was the very teaching of the Old Testament itself on cultus. While sacrifices were considered gifts, as Gray⁷⁴ shows, and even so conservative a scholar as Young⁷⁵ agrees, they were not considered efficacious because they were gifts. This teaching was common among other religions, but in Yahweh's religion they were of a more symbolical nature. God had brought Israel into a covenantal relationship. Within this relationship there were sins of ignorance or inadvertency. "And the sacrificial or Levitical ritual system was the means appointed for obviating the consequences of these inevitable offences."⁷⁶ "These were not offered [317] in order to attain His grace, but to retain it."⁷⁷

The "sins of the high hand" were of a different nature however.⁷⁸ For these sins, no sacrifice would atone; the offender was left to appeal to God

⁷³Smith, loc. cit.

⁷⁴Gray, op. cit., p. 20.

⁷⁵Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 85.

⁷⁶A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament, edited by S. D. F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 316.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 316-317.

⁷⁸Edward Koenig, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Fourth edition; Stuttgart: Chr. Belser A. G., Verlagbuchhandlung, 1923), pp. 294-295.

directly, for they were done in a spirit of rebellion. And rebellion is just what Amos considered the non-observance of Yahweh's ethical demands.⁷⁹

The people thought that redoubled assiduity in ritual and increase in the splendor of their gifts would atone for their offences, however great. But their idea was a misconception of the very principle of the ritual system, which had respect only to those true to the fundamental condition of the covenant relations which they had transgressed.⁸⁰

Allusions to a Fertility Cult

This concept of sacrifice as a sort of magical power by which man could gain a firm grip on God was the Canaanite cultic view, of which Hosea has much to say. It is peculiar that Amos does not have much to say about this Canaanite cult, for it certainly must have had a firm foothold at his time. The span of twenty years at most until Hosea can hardly have furnished enough time for the cult to grow to the widespread position it later held from comparative insignificance. There are, however, some indications in Amos that the fertility cult practices were in use.

Amos 2:17b reads: "a man and his father will go in unto the (same) maid." Because the usual term, מַדְוָּלָה , for a cultic prostitute is not used here, and because the context points only to ethical sins, Terrien⁸¹ doubts that Amos is attacking a particular cultic act as improper, because

⁷⁹Norman H. Smith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 77.

⁸⁰Davidson, op. cit., p. 318.

⁸¹Samuel Terrien, Classroom notes taken by this writer at Union Theological Seminary, Summer Session 1951.

it is false cultus. The close connection with other actions near an altar, v. 8. would seem to indicate a cultic act,⁸² whether Amos denounced it for that reason or not. In any case, temple prostitution was one of the prime marks of the fertility cult.⁸³

Likewise, the term, "Day of Yahweh,"⁸⁴ is not only a prophetic term, but had a parallel in the fertility cult.

Scholars "recognize it as a part of the prevalent cult of the dying and rising God, which in turn was an expression in myth and ritual of the annual pulsations of vital activity through the succeeding seasons . . . of growth and decay in vegetation and procreation and stagnation in animal life.

Scholars like Graham and May have found extensive use in Hosea and Micah of fertility cult terminology with which the prophets ironically described the future. We have found no discussion of possible cultic terminology in Amos, but several points of contact in thought and terminology are to be found in Amos. The chastisements which Yahweh had sent to cause the people to repent included some considered to be in the domain of Baal, as famines, drought, blight, mildew, and locusts.⁸⁶ Ritual wailing was supposed to revive the dead God and bring the forces of fertility back.⁸⁷ Amos, however, states that the wailing will be after a national disaster,

⁸²Harper, op. cit., p. 51.

⁸³H. G. May, "The Fertility cult in Hosea," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XLVIII (January, 1932), 85.

⁸⁴5:18.

⁸⁵J. W. P. Smith, The Prophets and their Times, 2nd revised edition by William A. Irwin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 67.

⁸⁶4:6-9. Note that this follows immediately after a discussion of cultus.

⁸⁷William Greighton Graham, "Some suggestions toward the Interpretation of Micah 1:10-16," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XLVII (July, 1931), 244.

and significantly (1) will be done by husbandmen, and in vineyards.⁸⁸ This would include wailing as at the death of an only son,⁸⁹ another possible cultic thought.⁹⁰ Immediately following this,⁹¹ Amos promises a famine, but this was to be a famine of God's word which would not be found though they seek Him. This is reminiscent of the cultic research for the dead God,⁹² as is also Amos' theme, "Seek Yahweh and live."⁹³ Most significant of all is an emendation of 8:14 which would read, with many commentators, Dod and Ashim, cultic deities.⁹⁴ Later, those fleeing from Yahweh will find no protection in Mt. Carmel, noted for its Baal shrine.⁹⁵ The final oracle of the blessedness of the coming age is almost universally denied to Amos, but it is noteworthy that these blessings were all of the kind that Baal was supposed to grant.⁹⁶

It is true that some of these points were common to Semitic life, and Amos, as a shepherd or herdsman, though not a farmer, might have resorted to

⁸⁸8:9-10.

⁸⁹3:10.

⁹⁰Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁹¹8:11-12.

⁹²Hay, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82.

⁹³5:4.

⁹⁴Bever, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁹⁵*cf.* Elijah's controversy in I Kings 18.

⁹⁶9:9-15

such agricultural pictures. However, it is, at best, difficult to sustain the view that these reflect cultic thought with any degree of certainty. Further study of fertility rites may lend this possibility more weight.

Conclusion

In any case, this much is certain: Amos does not, with the possible exception of one verse, 2:7b, attack the cultus of the Israelites because it was the wrong cultus. Considering the fact that he so vigorously condemns the cultus when he does mention it, there seem to be only two possibilities: (1) Amos wished to overthrow all cultus, pure or not, or (2) Amos inveighed against the common misuse of cultus, pure or not. His use of sharp words and contrast, while never explicitly stating that he referred only to the abuse of the ceremonies has brought many to the conclusion that Amos did in fact oppose all cults par se. However, there is a common factor in every reference to cult or sanctuary or sacrifice, save one. That common factor is that Amos coupled this reference with the coming doom.

Amos 5:4-5, 14-15, 21-27, as well as 8:15, 9:1-3, and 3:14 all join the cult with doom. The last three are all short notices, and do little more than to say that the sanctuaries and those that trusted in them were going to be destroyed. Chapter five, however, as mentioned earlier, stresses the certainty of the coming Day of Yahweh. Does this not give an indication of Amos' reason for discussing cultus? His mission was to lead a rebellious nation back to Yahweh. Their life was a testimony to this apostasy. But they would not turn, for they felt that the cultus assured the presence of Yahweh.⁹⁷ Amos

had to denounce their worship, for it was a hindrance to their repentance. Amos thus does not bother to sort out good or bad rites in cultus. When they used it as a substitute for repentance and God-pleasing righteousness, it was wrong; no matter how proper. The one mention of cultus that does not, strictly speaking, (though the preceding verse mentions doom) include a message of certain destruction, is the very passage that appears to discuss the people's use of the cult and the false value they placed upon it!

It may hardly be supposed that Amos would have done away with sacrifice and ritual entirely if he could It was not ritual as such to which he objected, but rather the practice of ritual by people who believed that thereby they set in motion magical forces and insured for themselves well-being and happiness. Amos would not have had them give up ritual; but he insisted that their ceremonial should be the expression of a devout and humble faith in a God who demanded first of all moral character and social justice.⁹⁸

Oosterley considers it an argument of great weight, that Amos did not substitute a spiritual worship for the "physical" cultus.

Even had Amos himself envisaged a purely spiritual form of worship, which for one living in the eighth century B. C. is highly improbable, could he have supposed that this would be possible for the ignorant masses? The prophets were practical men, they understood those with whom they had to deal; with their deep religious zeal the sight of worshippers steeped in sin was hateful beyond words; but it was the worshippers, not the worship, that filled them with horror. The worship was needed, provided that it was worship; and if offered in the right spirit, the sacrificial form of worship was, in the circumstances, not merely the best in that age, but the only one that could be offered.⁹⁹

⁹⁸J. H. P. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁹⁹Oosterley, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

However, the shoe fits both feet. If the worship which Amos witnessed was only an abuse of worship, why does he not explain how to worship properly with a sacrificial ceremonial?

The destruction which Amos announced was not only sure, but he undoubtedly viewed it as imminent. In such a situation there was not time enough for the long process of reindoctrinating the people both for the primary and secondary aspects of religion. In the day of distress one thing was all important: grasping Yahweh as the center of all of life, the controller of every relationship. Since the cultus was, we presume, the largest barrier to this prime goal, and was evidently completely misunderstood by many, it had to go, at least for the present, until the worshippers themselves were just and righteous. The radical problem demanded radical measures. Further, we may assume from the record, that it was not Amos' God-given mission to do more than to pronounce the doom and call for repentance.¹⁰⁰

I suspect [109] the truth is that the prophets did not face the question as to what they would do if the current cultus were abolished. They were not religious legislators. They had received a word from the Lord and their duty was completed when they delivered it.¹⁰¹

In summation then we may say that Amos was primarily concerned with bringing a rebellious people to Yahweh. Anything which obstructed this process was condemned, as also their use of cultus. To stress this, he even said "no cultus" to emphasize "not cultus only." He did not legislate for the future, for the Day of the Lord was at hand. In the heat of controversy he bitterly condemned cultus as he saw it. But because he was in the center

¹⁰⁰W. R. Smith, *op. cit.*; p. 141; Lods, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁰¹G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament against its Environment* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), p. 108.

of a certain situation, he cannot be said to have intended that this condemnation should be taken in an absolute sense. Loyal devotion to Yahweh — this was Amos' prime and only concern, not cultus.

Rejection of Israel's Fertility Gods

Amos presents our most detailed description of the fertility gods in Israel. This was in keeping with his message. Through Amos and Hosea we get the information from Hebrew expressing Israel's primitive in the worship of fertility gods. Amos was not in the least that his own people had not only rejected Yahweh, but in effect had set up the gods of the Canaanites in his stead.

The fertility of the soil was in reality not in essence a supernatural function of gods,¹ usually connected with agriculture in particular.

The mystery of sex, like the mystery of blood, was an inevitable feature in early interpretation of the reproductive mystery of life, of its relation to the supernatural powers surrounding man and the universe. The conception of the god as physically married to the land and as producing the fruit seems part of this idea underlying the fertility cults.²

Among the Canaanites these gods were the lords of nature. The male god, Baal, was the "lord" or "possessor" of the land, who gave the power of fertility to the soil.³ Each locality was thought to have its own local Baal. The female counterpart to Baal was Asherah, mentioned as early as Judges 16:17 as

¹ James A. Justin, *The Religious Beliefs of the People of the Kingdom of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1907), pp. 25-26.

² See Charles Johnson, *The Hebrews and the Gods of the Canaanites* (London: Duckworth, 1912), p. 12.

CHAPTER III

HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE

Rejection of Israel's Fertility Cult

Hosea presents our most detailed description of the cultus in Israel. This was in keeping with his message. Whereas Amos and Micah saw the defection from Yahweh expressing itself primarily in the practical atheism of daily living, Hosea was out to the quick that his own people had not only forsaken Yahweh, but in effect had set up the gods of the Canaanites in His stead.

The nations of the near east in antiquity had in common a male-female pantheon of gods,¹ usually connected with agriculture in particular.

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¹Elmer A. Leslie, Old Testament Religion in the Light of Its Canaanite Background (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1934), pp. 20-32.

²H. Wheeler Robinson, Two Hebrew Prophets (London & Redhill: Lutterworth Press), p. 18.

³Ibid., p. 33.

the recipient of Israel's worship. Actually the Baalim played the more exclusive role in the biblical record.

The worship of the Baalim took place on the סִיְאֵל , the high places, where the shrines were regularly located. These shrines contained an assortment of ceremonial furniture and the usual altars of sacrifice and incense. There was the אֵלֶּיִם , or sacred post, connected with the male deity, and thought by some to be a phallic emblem.⁴ It was possibly ornamented, and later grew into an image or idol.⁵ The female deity was connected with the אֵלֶּיִם , a tree or sacred wooden pole.⁶ Other common marks of the high places were oaks, poplars, and terebinths. We cannot be sure what meaning these objects had for the Israelites during the later monarchy, but all are mentioned in the biblical record.

The cultic personnel included priests and both male and female prostitutes.⁷ The latter, אֵלֶּיִם and אֵלֶּיִם , were considered sacred and played an essential role in the ritual of the fertility cult. Through cohabitation with them, the worshippers attempted sympathetically to inaugurate the comparable fertilization of the earth.⁸ This feature was also carried over into Israelite worship.

⁴Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Scholars are in substantial agreement about the details of the Canaanite fertility cult. Because of its completeness we quote Leslie's work extensively.

⁵W. O. E. Oesterley, *Sacrifices in Ancient Israel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, n.d.), p. 163.

⁶Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

The shrines were probably the center of community life.⁹ The people resorted to them not only on the festivals, but also for direction and guidance from the priests. In the main the festivals of the fertility-cults bear a striking resemblance to the agricultural festivals of Israel.¹⁰ The custom of most scholars of interpreting the festivals of the Israelites only in terms of these heathen cults, not allowing any direct divine institution, is undoubtedly overdone.¹¹ However, the great similarity in such festivals as Unleavened bread, Weeks, and Booths,¹² may well account for the ease with which the Israelites incorporated some of the heathen rites into their celebration.

It appears that the animals sacrificed and the types of sacrifices used in the Canaanite-cultus are not particularly distinguishable from those of the Mosaic code.¹³ They differed completely, however, in purpose.

It is clear, especially from the Ras Shamra sources, that the dominating motive which underlay the sacrificial system was the desire to maintain by marginal acts the regularity of the fertility processes in nature, particularly the rainfall, productivity of the soil and fecundity in the flocks and herds. The offerings embodied a kind of coercive or co-operative magic.¹⁴

Thus the gods, festivals, shrine appointments, sacred prostitution, sacrifices, in short, everything in the Canaanite cult was centered in sex and

⁹R. H. Rowley, The Re-Discovery of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 233.

¹⁰Leslie, op. cit., pp. 39-43.

¹¹G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament against its Environment (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), p. 101.

¹²Leslie, op. cit., pp. 40-43.

¹³Ibid., pp. 44-45.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 46.

and fertility. All their rites were used to "force" the gods to produce an abundant crop or flock, ex opere operato.

The cultic rites were built about myth. Central in the myth was the dying and later rising god, who subsequently had a fruitful marriage with the goddess. This myth was re-enacted in the fertility rites, ". . . a religion of the senses, an aesthetic cult. It was literally a religion of wine, women, and song."¹⁵

May¹⁶ has found many allusions to the mythology and ceremonial of the fertility-cults in Hosea. As Adonis was torn by a wild boar, Israel is destroyed by Yahweh who tears as a lion, a leopard, and a bear.¹⁷ Adonis went to Sheol, where his healing was accomplished, but Israel will not be healed.¹⁸ The withdrawal of the god brought the barren unfertile seasons. Yahweh, too, has withdrawn from Israel,¹⁹ and His departure is accompanied by human barrenness.²⁰ The supposed departure of the nature gods was accompanied by ritual wailing, as the departure of Yahweh will cause them

¹⁵H. G. May, "The Fertility Cult in Hosea," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XLVIII (January, 1932), 93.

¹⁶Ibid. Unless otherwise noted the material in this paragraph is taken from this work.

¹⁷5:14; 13:7; 6:1-2.

¹⁸5:13.

¹⁹5:6-7.

²⁰9:11-12.

to wail,²¹ and possibly, to cut themselves.²² A feature common to the ancient Babylonian, Grecian, and Egyptian myth was the search for the dead god. Repentant Israel seeks Yahweh,²³ whom she expects to come "raining" righteousness. The god's resurrection is echoed in the resurrection of Israel.²⁴ The return of the god was followed by his fruitful marriage to the goddess. May consider it significant that the restored people of Yahweh will be called sons, not of a dead god, but of "The Living God."²⁵ The marriage of the god and goddess, which brought the renewed fertility of the soil, was reenacted by the people in their relations with the sacred prostitutes. The "gain of a harlot," was a dowry or bride price. Apparently it was used to refer to the gift of the worshipper to the shrine, and symbolized the gifts of produce from the gods.

This interpretation is difficult to accept in toto. It would not be out of keeping with prophetic style for Hosea to make these allusions, but we cannot be sure that this was his intention. It is certain that he did use some fertility-cult terminology, as in chapter two.

In this second chapter, Hosea presents the root problem with which he dealt, Israel's worship of the Baalim. This chapter is the application of the parable of his own marriage. Israel is pictured as a faithless wife who has deserted her divine Husband for her paramours, the Baalim. She is finally

²¹7:14-16.

²²For "assemble themselves," 7:14, read "cut themselves" with gn. 20 MSS, cf. I Kings 18:28 and Oesterley, gn. iii., p. 149.

²³2:8-9; 10-12.

²⁴6:2; 13:14.

²⁵1:10.

brought back to her true husband when he renews the marriage covenant and gives her the very gifts of produce which she thought her paramours had given her.

And she shall follow after her lovers
 . . . but she shall not find them;
 then she shall say, "I will go and return to my first
 husband"
 For she did not know that I gave her
 corn and wine and oil and . . . silver and gold,
 which they prepared for Baal.
 Therefore I will return and take away
 my corn . . . my wine . . . my wool and my flax
 I will also cause her mirth to cease
 her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths
 and all her solemn feasts.
 And I will destroy her vines . . . her fig trees,
 whereof she hath said, 'These are my rewards
 that my lovers have given me.'
 And I will make them a forest
 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim,
 wherein she . . . went after her lovers,
 and forgot me²⁶

Here we see that Hosea considered the Israelites to have worshipped Baalim, not Yahweh, and that they felt indebted to them for the fruits of agriculture. They did not realize that Yahweh gave all, even gold and silver. Their worship of the Baalim was harlotry, unfaithfulness to Yahweh, and these feasts, "days of Baalim," would bring Yahweh's punishment upon them. The punishment would be the frustration of the very purpose of their worship, a denial of the fruit of the land through its destruction. By this withdrawal Yahweh would draw them back to Himself. The context indicates that this would take place in the time of the captivity.

²⁶2:7-9, 11-13. All quotations unless otherwise noted are from the AV. The versification is from Julius A. Sewer, "The book of the Twelve Prophets Volume I," Harper's Annotated Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949).

Therefore . . . I will allure her,
 and bring her into the wilderness,
 . . . at that day . . . thou shalt call me 'Ishi',
 and shalt call me no more 'Baali'.
 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her
 mouth,
 and they shall no more be remembered by their name.
 And I will betroth thee unto me forever, . . .
 in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-
 kindness, and in mercies.²⁷

This wilderness has been taken to mean the wasted Palestine or, as is more probable, captivity in a foreign land.²⁸ There Yahweh would again woo His people that they might recognize Him as their husband. Baali, "my lord," and Ishi, "my husband," have practically the same meaning, but the former is rejected because of its connection with the Baalim.²⁹ Even the very names of the Baalim will be forgotten. This betrothal would be not a physical thing, bringing the bride gifts of oil and corn and flax, but spiritual, bringing a dowery-gift³⁰ of mercy and kindness and justice. In this beautiful chapter, Hosea boldly turns the lewd picture of the fertility cult into a warm message of Yahweh's husbandly love for his bride, Israel.

This is the background in which Hosea's message of the cultus must be read. Israel looked to a semi-magical fertility-cult religion that centered in obtaining material goods. An important question remains which has

²⁷2:14, 16, 17, 19.

²⁸William Hainey Harper, "Amos and Hosea," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 239.

²⁹Sidney Lawrence Brown, "The Book of Hosea," Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen & Co., 1932), p. 22.

³⁰Harper, op. cit., p. 238.

usually brought cautious answers, "Did the people believe they were worshipping Yahweh, or did they picture the Baalis as existing alongside Yahweh?"

Many feel that the Israelites considered themselves to be worshipping Yahweh.

When Israel dispossessed the Canaanites, it meant that Yahweh was dispossessing their Baalim. What was more natural than that he should become heir to their worship, and be worshipped . . . as the local Baal, when his people settled down to agricultural life and needed a God of agriculture?³¹

This is also the view of Weiser³² and Vols.³³ Sellin³⁴ says that the Israelites had so deified Yahweh to the likeness of Baal that they could speak of different Yahwehs of the various shrines. The Israelites associated these shrines with theophanies of Yahweh in past history and continued the fertility-type worship there.³⁵ This would be in keeping with their calling Yahweh, "my Baal,"³⁶ swearing by Yahweh's name,³⁷ and using His feasts.³⁸

³¹H. P. Robinson, op. cit., p. 33.

³²Arthur Weiser, "Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten I." Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), XXIV, 14.

³³Paul Vols, Prophetengestalten des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1949), p. 169.

³⁴Ernst Sellin, Das Alttestamentliche Prophetentum (Leipzig: A. Reichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912), p. 35.

³⁵Leclis, op. cit., p. 74.

³⁶2:16.

³⁷4:15.

³⁸9:51 2:11.

On the other hand, there are indications that all or some of the Israelites may have considered Yahweh one of several gods. Hosea says that Israel had forgotten Yahweh,³⁹ had gone after other lovers,⁴⁰ and had sacrificed to Baal.⁴¹ The wide use of cultic rites of the Baalim, and consulting at stocks and staffs⁴² and worshipping at various high places, would seem to indicate that the Israelites had a pantheon, with Yahweh as prime god.⁴³ Euber explains this peculiar acceptance of Yahweh and the Baalim beginning at the time of the judges:

As soon as the war of liberation is proclaimed, there is in reality none but YHWH, and immediately the baalim are forgotten [75] But when peace returned and the regular life of soil-cultivation is re-established, it is difficult for YHWH to stand everywhere The Canaanite soil cultivation is linked with apparently unbreakable bonds of tradition to sexual myths and rites; whereas YHWH . . . is altogether above sex, and cannot tolerate it that sex, which like all natural life needs hallowing by Him, should be declared holy by its own natural power.⁴⁴

It is probable that no single view existed in Israel; some were faithful to Yahweh, some worshipped Baalim, some both, and some baalised Yahweh.

It is certain, however, as Oesterley⁴⁵ and Coleran⁴⁶ point out, that

³⁹2:13.

⁴⁰2:17.

⁴¹11:1-3.

⁴²4:2.

⁴³Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁴⁴Martin Euber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Witter-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), pp. 74-75.

⁴⁵Oesterley, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁶James B. Coleran, "The Prophets and Sacrifices," Theological Studies, V (December, 1949), 428.

Hosea considered the people to be worshipping not Yahweh, or even a perverted Yahweh, but other gods. Hosea writes, "the more they called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and burning incense to idols."⁴⁷ Of Hosea's criticism of idols we shall treat later.

Insufficiency of Israel's Sacrifices

The prime passage from which some have inferred that Hosea was absolutely opposed to cultus is 6:6.

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;
and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

The preceding context, 1-5, speaks of Israel's repentance and certainty of God's speedy forgiveness. But Yahweh refuses their repentance, for it is as lasting as the quickly-vanishing dew. He desires mercy, rather than sacrifice. This might imply that their repentance included a dependence on the power of sacrifice to placate Yahweh.⁴⁸ However, most commentators connect v. 6 more closely with its succeeding context, which describes these people as robbers and murderers and those who have broken the covenant.

In any case, v. 6 betrays the importance laid upon sacrifices. The key is the understanding of the \int in the phrase, $\text{וְיָרָם מִבְּרִיתֵנוּ}$. Not a few feel that the force is not comparative, "more than," but negative, "away from," "not burnt offerings."⁴⁹ Gesenius concurs in this construction.⁵⁰ The anti-

⁴⁷11:2 RSV

⁴⁸O. Procksch, "Die kleinen prophetischen Schriften vor dem Exil," Erläuterungen zum Alten Testament (Calw und Stuttgart: Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1910), p. 38.

⁴⁹Christopher E. North, "Sacrifice in the Old Testament," The Expository Times, XLVII (March, 1936), 252.

⁵⁰Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch, 2nd revised edition by A. H. Cowley (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1910), section 119x.

which uses the negative relatively for emphasis, discussed above.⁵⁴ Lattey⁵⁵ finds the verb to mean not only "desire," but frequently simply "delight in," the usage here stating that Yahweh delights in chesed most. It is further noted that Hosea was not the first to have sounded such a warning. Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice."⁵⁶ Hosea deepened this by setting up $\tau \textcircled{?} \pi$ as God's desire, but he still spoke as a spiritual son of the prophets, Samuel and Elijah, who were both noted for offering sacrifices. To overthrow sacrifice was to overthrow his famous forbears in Hebrew history.⁵⁷

That Hosea never intended to overthrow sacrifice is shown by his view of the coming abolition of cultus during the captivity. Most scholars agree that he considered this a punishment.⁵⁸ Hosea mentions the cessation of the feasts⁵⁹ and sacrifices, and the sorrow at the inability to eat clean food, offer sacrifices, and celebrate the feasts of Yahweh.

The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.⁶⁰

⁵⁴Supra, p. 13.

⁵⁵Quoted in Coleran, op. cit., p. 426.

⁵⁶1 Samuel 15:22.

⁵⁷C. Lattey, "The Prophets and Sacrifice: A Study in Biblical Relativity," The Journal of Theological Studies, XLII (1941), 159.

⁵⁸Lattey, op. cit., p. 160; Oesterley, op. cit., p. 201; Melville Scott, The Message of Hosea (London: SPOK, 1921), p. 69.

⁵⁹2:11.

⁶⁰3:4.

. . . they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. They shall not offer wine offering . . . their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners . . . What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?⁶¹

Food was made clean by offering the first fruits to God, which would be impossible in Assyria.⁶² The apparent sanction of images and the teraphim is singular. They cannot be taken to connote idolatry, however, as Hosea roundly condemns such practices elsewhere.⁶³ Lods sums up Hosea's heartfelt sympathy for the people at the thought of this punishment.

. . . prophets did not demand the abolition of sacrifices and the creation of a new and purely spiritual worship. They understood quite well [69] -- no doubt because they would share it themselves . . . the appalling distress which the exiles would feel if these venerated rites were forcibly suspended.⁶⁴

It should be noted however, that Hosea does not add explicitly that sacrifices will be resumed after the coming exile, when "David" shall rule again. This is true throughout Hosea. There are elements of hope, but no mention of a future cultus.

A single favorable mention of sacrifice has been found in 14:12. The Hebrew reads:

Take with you words, and turn to Yahweh:
say unto Him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive good,
so will we render the calves, our lips."

⁶¹19:3-4.

⁶²Coleran, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

⁶³For an excellent discussion of this passage see Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-32.

⁶⁴Adolphe Lods, *The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism*, translated by S. H. Hooke (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. 1937), p. 68.

Recent scholars⁶⁵ have read the text, "fruit of our lips," which is still a peculiar use of the word "fruit." Van Hookmaker⁶⁶ reads, "Fruit of our folds," a more sensible reading, if not textual, and thus allows sacrifice offered in the proper spirit.

Hosea 14:2 is more often read in connection with 5:6.

They shall go with their flocks and with their herds
to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him;
he hath withdrawn himself from them.

Words will be acceptable to Yahweh, that is, the fruit of our lips, but flocks will not find God.⁶⁷ To reach a god that has removed himself from men, sacrifices will not avail. The following verse states that their faithless dealing with Yahweh, a picture of adultery, has caused this estrangement. "Yahweh's patience has an end; their superstitious ritualism and self-sufficiency can no longer be tolerated."⁶⁸ Volk,⁶⁹ of course, cites this to prove Hosea's complete negation of cultus.

Another passage often alluded to in connection with 6:6 is the attack on the priesthood, 4:4-15.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,
Because thou hast rejected knowledge,
I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest
to me.
Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God
They set up the sin of my people,
and they set their heart on their iniquity.⁷⁰

⁶⁵Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 119; Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁶⁶Quoted by Coleran, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

⁶⁷Baber, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁶⁸Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

⁶⁹Volk, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁷⁰4:6, 8.

The priests are berated for not teaching the Torah. In addition their cult was robbed of spiritual and ethical meaning,⁷¹ their own example was an abomination,⁷² for they greedily ate the sacrifices,⁷³ and lived off the cult in general.⁷⁴ Hosea lays the burden of Israel's guilt at the feet of the priests, because they did not teach the proper religion to the people, as was their sacred charge.⁷⁵ However, as is often pointed out, the priests are not attacked for teaching a cultus, or being cultic persons.⁷⁶ The prophets did not condemn the priesthood, but only its neglect and abuse.⁷⁷

Hosea mentions a Torah twice in chapter 8 in close connection to the basic points of his condemnation.

. . . a vulture is over the house of the LORD,
because they have broken my covenant,⁷⁸
and trespassed my law.

Were I to write for him my laws by ten thousands,
they would be regarded as a strange thing.⁷⁹

⁷¹Muriel Curtis, quoted by Coleran, op. cit., p. 417.

⁷²Weiser, op. cit., p. 32.

⁷³Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 61.

⁷⁴Harper, op. cit., p. 258.

⁷⁵Volz, op. cit., p. 167.

⁷⁶Owen H. Gates, "The Relation of Priests to Sacrifice before the Exile," Journal of Biblical Literature, XXVII (1908), 80.

⁷⁷Brown, op. cit., p. 41.

⁷⁸8:1 (RSV).

⁷⁹8:12 (RSV).

Hosea summarizes his condemnation of the Israelites in the intervening context, accusing them of breaking the covenant, of idolatry, of foreign alliances, and of a sinful cultus.

In keeping with the usual interpretation of the entire Old Testament, Hosea considers Yahweh's covenant with His people to have been closely associated with a body of laws, Torah. Israel was bound by this covenant to observe this body of laws.⁸⁰ This covenant was broken when men did not keep charged or continue in the knowledge of Yahweh.⁸¹

Furthermore, this covenantal Torah was probably a body of written laws.⁸² The proper reading of 8:12 has been the object of some conjecture.⁸³ It is usually taken as a hypothetical statement, rather than a statement of past fact. This need only imply, however, that Yahweh considers increasing the number of laws already written.⁸⁴ Caiger⁸⁵ notes Hosea's wide knowledge of the contents of the canonical books of the Old Testament. He finds Hosea alluding to almost all of the Law and the Former Prophets, and both the northern Elohist and southern Jehovistic narrative.

The content of these laws, mentioned by Hosea, is generally considered

⁸⁰A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament, edited by S. D. F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904), p. 100; Duber, op. cit., p. 118.

⁸¹8:2; 6:6-7.

⁸²Proksch, op. cit., p. 44.

⁸³See Harper, op. cit., pp. 320-323 for a full discussion.

⁸⁴Oesterley, op. cit., p. 200; Harper, op. cit., p. 321.

⁸⁵Stephen L. Caiger, Lives of the Prophets (Revised and enlarged edition; London: SPCK, 1949), p. 105.

to be primarily moral,⁸⁶ though they probably included also some ceremonial laws.

It is important as bearing witness to the existence of written 'directions' which were supposed to be authoritative and to embody principles of universal obligation in Israel, and the context suggests, here and in iv. 6-8, that the 'directions' alluded to are ethical and moral, and not merely ceremonial.⁸⁷

Oesterley⁸⁸ notes that the immediately succeeding context, "they love to offer sacrifices," indicates that these laws included cultic directions.

J. M. P. Smith agrees that Hosea would have allowed a purified cult when he comments in connection with this verse:

All Israel's sin and troubles were traced back by him to one single cause, v. 12, the failure of Israel to understand aright the character of Yahweh. If they would but learn to know Yahweh aright, the cultus would be rightly used and interpreted; the social order would be relieved of its abuses; and the foreign policy of Israel would be wisely conceived and conducted.⁸⁹

So Hosea never condemned a practice only because it was opposed to a commandment. He saw that all these practices were opposed to Yahweh.

Weiser doubts the genuineness of these verses,⁹⁰ and Harper is certain that v. 1 is a later addition.⁹¹

⁸⁶Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

⁸⁷Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁸⁸Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁸⁹J. M. P. Smith, The Prophets and their Times, Second revised edition by William A. Irwin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 82.

⁹⁰Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁹¹Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

The importance which the Israelites placed on sacrifices is illustrated by their multiplication of altars.

Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin,
altars shall be unto him to sin.⁹²

The phrase, "to sin," in its first occurrence has caused difficulty. Some would excise it, as it does not occur in the LXX. It is possible to read it as sarcasm.⁹⁴ Others point the Massoretic $\text{ס' 20 } \Pi ?$ as $\text{ס' 70 } \Pi ?$, a piel infinitive absolute, to mean, "Ephraim set up altars to atone for sin, but they are to him sin."⁹⁵ Ultimately the meaning is not that Hosea views altars themselves as sinful, but the people's exaggerated emphasis on them betrays an attitude which invalidates any value they might have. Hosea 10:1 states that the Israelites built more altars and richer pillars as Yahweh increasingly became more confirmed in their misunderstanding of Yahweh's basic desires.⁹⁶ The succeeding verse, 10:2, "their heart is smooth (or divided),"⁹⁷ would indicate either that their worship was deceitfully offered, only to insure continued abundance,⁹⁸ or that it was divided, now to Yahweh, now to Baal.⁹⁹

In this connection we note also the multiplication of shrines. Hosea

928:11.

93Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

94Ibid., p. 74.

95Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

96Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

97Eber, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

98Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

99Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

mentions Bethel,¹⁰⁰ Gilgal,¹⁰¹ Baal-Beer,¹⁰² and Beth Aven,¹⁰³ "House of Naughtiness."¹⁰⁴ This was a small town a few miles from Bethel, near the ancient Ai.¹⁰⁵ It is probably used as a pun to signify Bethel, "House of God." This multiplication of shrines was in keeping with the principle that each locality had its own Baal.

Rejection of Israel's Idolatry

A far greater misunderstanding of worship which Hosea roundly condemns is the use of idols. The calves of Beth-aven¹⁰⁶ and Samaria¹⁰⁷ are probably the bull images set up by Jeroboam.¹⁰⁸ The inhabitants of Samaria would tremble because of these calves at the time of the invasion when the calves would be carried off to Assyria as tribute, or splintered into pieces.¹⁰⁹ Because these idols are man-made¹¹⁰ and originate only from man, they are no-

¹⁰⁰10:15; 12:4.

¹⁰¹4:15; 9:15; 12:11.

¹⁰²9:10.

¹⁰³4:15; 5:8; 10:5.

¹⁰⁴Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁵Harry L. Conins, *Teaching the Prophets* (Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1936), p. 74.

¹⁰⁶10:5.

¹⁰⁷8:5.

¹⁰⁸1 Kings 12:28 ff.

¹⁰⁹10:5-6; 8:6.

¹¹⁰13:2.

gods.¹¹¹ "In effect, this is monotheism."¹¹²

Of all the verses which mention idolatry, 13:2 has brought the greatest flurry of comment.

. . . when he offended in Baal, he died.
 And now they sin more and more,
 and have made them molten images of their silver,
 and idols according to their own understanding,
 all of it the work of the craftsmen.
 They say of them, 'Let the men
 that sacrifice kiss the calves.'¹¹³

The LXX was the first to translate "men that sacrifice" as "Sacrifice men!" Scott¹¹⁴ concurs in reading $\text{אֲנָשִׁים מְזַבְּחִים}$, "sacrifice men!" and suggests also $\text{אֲנָשִׁים מְזַבְּחִים}$ for $\text{אֲנָשִׁים מְזַבְּחִים}$, rendering this portion of the verse "kiss the children!" This would give the threatened curse of childlessness in 9:13 a more pointed meaning; the punishment was to be in kind with the sin.¹¹⁵ This displays ingenuity, but outside of Ahar's sacrifice of his son, there is no evidence that there was any child sacrifice in Hosea's time. Leslie¹¹⁶ contends that there was child sacrifice in the early Canaanite cults, but Harper¹¹⁷ states that there is no evidence that child sacrifice was connected with image worship.

It is probably better to take $\text{אֲנָשִׁים מְזַבְּחִים}$ as an idiomatic expression for "men who sacrifice," as "princes of men" for "Princely men."¹¹⁸

¹¹¹8:6.

¹¹²Comins, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

¹¹³13:1-2.

¹¹⁴Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹⁶Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹¹⁷Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

¹¹⁸S. H. Lehrman, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Edited by A. Cohen (Bournemouth, Bants.: The Soncino Press, 1928), p. 49.

However, there may be a sarcastic allusion to actual human sacrifice as a ridiculous possibility connected with the nature cult. "Kiss the calves" is Hosea's ridicule of a custom connected with idol worship. Yahweh told Elijah that there were yet seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal, nor kissed him.¹¹⁹ Hosea considered this Baal-idolatry as the original cause for the death of Ephraim, which would become physical death in the imminent invasion from the north.¹²⁰

Hosea has often been praised as the first prophet to object to idol-worship in principle.¹²¹ Amos does not mention the practice except in 5:26 which is very vague. Elijah and Elisha are not recorded as opposing idols in principle. It is to be noted, however, that idolatry is not explicitly recorded as existing in their time either. Still, the existence of idols does not prove that there was no commandment forbidding idolatry.¹²²

Conclusion

Hosea's condemnation of the cultus, then was directed against a complex of factors. He opposed the people's use of Baal-fertility-cult rites, notably sacred prostitution; their idolatry; their improper opinion of the ex opere operata value of sacrifices; their narrow view of religion and duty to Yahweh, which included little more than ceremonial worship, and finally, he condemned

¹¹⁹ Kings 19:18.

¹²⁰ 13:1

¹²¹ *ods. pp. 91. p. 94.*

¹²² Arthur Weiser, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Second edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), p. 95.

their limited purpose in worship itself, to gain physical sustenance alone. In other words, he condemned practically every imaginable aspect of the cultus.

The picture was dark; the religious understanding was almost totally perverted. It was so perverted that he implies that the women worshippers who took part in the sexual rites were guiltless, not morally responsible for their actions.¹²³ Rather the men and the priests were to blame.

Yet he goes too far who finds Hosea condemning all cultus. The higher critics consider the labor of the Deuteronomists to rest on that of the eighth-century prophets. Certainly Deuteronomy is filled with exhortations urging love of the fellow man, but there is also cultic direction. The "Deuteronomists" must have understood the prophets as well as we, and they obviously did not feel that mercy and kindness were incompatible with proper sacrifice.¹²⁴ Furthermore, Hosea views the complete abolition of cultus as both a punishment and a sorry plight. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he did not suggest a purified and acceptable ceremonial. There are several possible explanations for this lack of legislation for a new cultus.

As in the case of Amos, the coming captivity was both sure and imminent, in point of fact, much closer. When this would come there would be no more opportunity for cultus, and so there was no reason to suggest a new cultus. Furthermore, Hosea's allusions to written laws lead to the conclusion that he considered those laws already existing sufficient to explain the god-pleasing

¹²³On 4:14 see Roland Emerson Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), p. 94.

¹²⁴H. H. Rowley, "The Prophets and Sacrifice," The Expository Times, LVIII (August, 1947), 307.

and spiritually proper worship. Finally, Hosea must be studied in terms of both his Sitz in Leben and his prophetic purpose. Israel was dead, not knowing the living God. Hosea was to revive them. So speak of a proper cultus, which was only intended to continue a covenantal relationship, would be of little purpose until they were again "sons of the living God." Hosea therefore was not sparing in his condemnation of anyone or anything.

Osee condemned everything that was actually being instrumental in leading the people away from Yahweh, whether cities like Bethel and Gilgal with their idolatrous shrines, or leaders of any class, or practices, whether social, moral, or religious. It is wrong to pick out one class and one practice that he condemned and say that he called in particular for its complete abolition. All things, even 'the land of Yahweh' itself, had to be purged to bring about the one central desideratum of true religion, the exclusive and heartfelt service of Yahweh. Cities, offices and cult practices could stand only if they represented such service and submission; if not, they must undergo condemnation and cleansing punishment. The particular sacrifices described by Osee were idolatrous, placing Yahweh on a par with the immoral, hateful gods of Canaan. Such sacrifices were worse than useless; they were a crowning insult to Yahweh.¹²⁵

We may safely conclude then, that Hosea thought only of the cultus he witnessed and that he roundly denounced that. He was not speaking of a theoretical and proper cultus, which we may suppose he would have allowed, though only as something secondary to the true knowledge of Yahweh. His mission was to convince of sin and preach the love of Yahweh, not to legislate for worship.

We could hardly conclude without wondering again at the message of Hosea. He saw a lowly vain religion. But, taught by his own love for his faithless wife, he took the very central motif of this lowly cult, and trans-

¹²⁵ Oeleran, op. cit., p. 431.

formed it into a moving parable of Yahweh's everlasting and forgiving love. To study Hosea without appropriating this love would render such study both meaningless and vain.

CHAPTER IV

NICAH: PROPHET OF JUSTICE

Insufficiency of Sacrifice

The study of Micah's attitude toward cultus is marred by questions of the authenticity of the book bearing his name. This is true of the foremost reference to cultus, 6:6-8. Ewald¹ began the trend in 1867 by dating this passage in the time of Manasseh, largely because of the child sacrifice mentioned in it, though still considering it from the pen of Micah. Others followed who placed it in post-exilic times,² though this was by no means a unanimous opinion.³ These scholars argued for a later date and an anonymous author because of the differing style, artistic form and historical background which they discerned in chapters six and seven.

While opinion still varies, there is no telling argument for denying this passage to Micah or for assigning it to "an anonymous prophet, ca. 500 B. C."⁴ Though human sacrifice, a prominent feature of the worship of Moloch, was also known in Hebrew history,⁵ there is no unmistakable allusion to a regular

¹Robert H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), p. 592.

²J. N. F. Smith, "Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, and Joel," International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp. 12-15.

³O. Procksch, "Die kleinen prophetischen Schriften vor dem Exil," Erläuterungen zum Alten Testament (Gail und Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1910), p. 120; George Adam Smith, "Book of the Twelve Prophets Volume I," The Expositor's Bible (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1891), p. 370.

⁴Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 593.

⁵Gen. 22; Judges 11:39-40.

practice of this sacrifice in the text.⁶ We may therefore consider this oracle as coming from the lips of Micah either during the reign of Hezekiah,⁷ or possibly from the reign of Manasseh, written in Micah's wellow old age.⁸

Micah 6:1-8 is a unit. Verses 1-5 contain Yahweh's controversy with His people. He calls upon them to remember His righteousness, that is, His gracious guidance and care for them in bringing them from Egypt and delivering them safely to the promised land. The case rests here. These people had an obligation to Yahweh. While it is not specifically mentioned in the text that this duty had not been fulfilled, the previous five chapters had proven this adequately. There Micah had also predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah as Yahweh's punishment for this faithlessness.

Verses 6-8 portray a penitent Israelite seeking forgiveness and a renewal of Yahweh's favor. Undoubtedly he also seeks to avert the doom Micah foretold. His repentance appears sincere enough, but his understanding of how Yahweh grants forgiveness is defective. He does know that cultic tradition which made it clear that one ought not appear before Yahweh empty-handed.⁹ Hence he asks which sacrifices will be sufficient to appease

⁶Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 593.

⁷Arthur Weiser, "Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten I," *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), XXIV, 203; Otto Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1934), p. 458.

⁸Julius A. Bower, "The book of the Twelve Prophets Volume I," *Harner's Annotated Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 64.

⁹Exodus 23:15; 34:20.

Yahweh's wrath, to renew His fellowship, and obtain His favor.

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before the high God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves of a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God?¹⁰

All but the first-born mentioned here were legitimate sacrifices according to the Mosaic code. Calves were proper for sacrifice upon reaching the age of eight days;¹¹ rams¹² and oil¹³ were also legitimate. Sacrifices on such a large scale were uncommon, but not unknown. At the occasion of the dedication of the temple Solomon offered thousands of animals,¹⁴ and in contemporary times Hezekiah and the princes had given thousands of animals for the Passover celebration.¹⁵

As has been noted,¹⁶ the idea of sacrifice as a gift to God was prevalent in Israel. Here again the thought of bargaining was in the mind of the people, represented by this lone Israelite. Whether or not the thought

¹⁰6:16-7. All quotations unless otherwise noted are from the AV. The versification is from Beyer, op. cit.

¹¹Lev. 22:27; Ex. 22:30; Lev. 9:3.

¹²Lev. 1:10.

¹³Ex. 29:2; Lev. 2:1; 7:12.

¹⁴1 Kings 3:4; 3:63.

¹⁵1 Chron. 30:24.

¹⁶Smith, p. 21.

of propitiation is also present has been the object of much debate. Gray comments on this passage:

The seventh century appears to have witnessed an emergence into greater prominence of propitiatory rites, though at the same time they attached themselves to and were but an intensification and multiplication of what had previously been a factor in Hebrew life.¹⁷

In the eyes of the prophet the people sought to barter for forgiveness. Their great guilt and deserved punishment they would offset by a greater sacrifice, ex opere operato. This is obviously a travesty on the use of sacrifice to Yahweh.

Seeking to find such a greater sacrifice, this individual suggests the possession dearest to him and to any Semitic father, his first-born son. West Semitic tribes were fond of sacrificing their first-born in times of extremity.¹⁸ In addition it should be noted that some of this same value was placed on the first-born in the Hebrew religion; the first-born was considered Yahweh's special possession and had to be redeemed.¹⁹ The suggestion to sacrifice the first-born would treat Yahweh as another god, however, for child sacrifice had been specifically condemned by Yahweh.²⁰ The mere suggestion indicates the people's viewpoint of sacrifice, as Gray

¹⁷Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 88.

¹⁸Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Wittan-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 91.

¹⁹Loc. cit.

²⁰Lev. 18:21; Deut. 18:10.

summarized:

To the prophets, then, the people seemed to act on the theory that what God wanted was more and costlier gifts, heavier payments; and that the suitable gifts to give him were slain animals; and that in extremity of their perplexity, they could even think of giving him the slain bodies of their own children.²¹

Micah's mention of child sacrifice has occasioned much discussion, centering largely about the dating of this passage. It had been practiced on occasion in Israel. Ahaz had given his own son to the flames.²² Albright²³ feels that this was copied after the Syrian custom of child sacrifice. This may well be the case as Ahaz had other syncretistic tendencies, e. g., copying the altar at Damascus.²⁴ During the reign of Hezekiah Judah's worship was cleansed of many, if not all, of the extra-Hebrew customs. Human sacrifice reappeared in Hebrew history shortly thereafter in the reign of Manasseh.²⁵ Just how prevalent this was is a moot question. That the Moloch-worshippers customarily killed their children in times of extremity, or that the Canaanite killed theirs at the laying of a new foundation,²⁶ is no proof that the Israelites did it commonly,²⁷ though they had undoubtedly heard of these rites.

Some scholars consider that 6:7 stems from Manasseh's time, and that

²¹Gray, op. cit., p. 43.

²²II King 16:10-16.

²³William Foxwell Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1946), p. 163.

²⁴II Kings 16:10-16.

²⁵II Kings 21:1-9.

²⁶Elmer A. Loelie, Old Testament Religion in the Light of Its Canaanite Background (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1934), p. 47.

²⁷Adam C. Welch, Prophet and Priest in Old Israel (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936), p. 78.

child sacrifice was a common practice then. This is by no means sure. It may only be mentioned in this verse as a logical possibility.²⁸ Since such sacrifice was known at the time, all that can be said with certainty is that if it was done at all during Hezekiah's reign, it was done only in extremity.²⁹ In any case, the very thought of coming before Yahweh with a slain child is to the prophet a "reductio ad absurdum," as its climactical position and succeeding context implies.

Nicah's grand answer stands in bold contrast to the question that precedes it.

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God!³¹

Yahweh demands more than a specific type of sacrifice; He wants a certain kind of attitude and life on the part of man. These three requirements of Yahweh bear a striking resemblance to the messages of the other prophets of the eighth century: Amos, justice, Hosea, mercy, and Isaiah, humility.

Amos advocated *דִּין*, justice.³² This word has a distinct forensic color.³³ It indicates either the laws, the act of judging, or the decision of

²⁸G. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

²⁹Melch, *op. cit.*, p. 79; Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

³⁰G. Lattey, "The Prophets and Sacrifices: A Study in Biblical Relativity," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XLII (1941), 161.

³¹Isa. 56:1.

³²Amos 5:24.

³³Norman H. Smith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946, p. 95.

the judge. This decision was rendered on the basis of the laws which God had revealed in the past, and upon the precedents set down by former judges. Doing right was following a very clearly defined moral pattern, "doing God's will as it had been made clear in past experience."³⁴

, mercy, is the key word in Hosea's message.³⁵ Any translation of this term in English is inadequate, and falls short of expressing its total meaning. Coleran suggests the Latin "religio, implying the right moral relationship, whether of justice or of charity, of man with his fellow men, and with God."³⁶ Others stress an element of duty and loyalty,³⁷ and describe it as an unflinchingly and consistently continuing action.³⁸

לִּישׁוּבָה אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאַתָּה יֵשׁוּבָה אִתִּי וְלִישׁוּבָה אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאַתָּה יֵשׁוּבָה אִתִּי , walk humbly with God, draws on the picture of God-pleasing Enoch, who "walked with God, and was not."³⁹ The verb, "walk," is used in numerous injunctions throughout the Old Testament: "Walk before me,"⁴⁰ "walk in my ways."⁴¹ Micah himself uses this metaphor of "walking in his paths"⁴² to indicate a continuing relationship with Yahweh.

³⁴Ibid., p. 96.

³⁵Hosea 6:6.

³⁶James E. Coleran, "The Prophets and Sacrifice," Theological Studies, V (December, 1949), 426.

³⁷H. H. Rowley, "The Prophets and Sacrifice," The Expository Times, LVIII (August, 1947), 137.

³⁸Op. the RSV translation, "steadfast love."

³⁹Gen. 5:24.

⁴⁰Gen. 17:1.

⁴¹1 Kings 3:14.

⁴²42.

וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת-יְהוָה, humbly, is an adverbial infinitive. G. A. Smith suggests that while it may mean "humbly" as in Pr. 11:2, it may also have as its root meaning "in secret, or secretly."⁴³ In either case the final meaning would hardly differ. It is a life centered in communion with Yahweh. This phrase is reminiscent of Isaiah's prophecies against the pride of Israel.⁴⁴

This beautiful statement may then be taken as a short summary of the eighth-century prophetic teaching. Indeed, because it is so concise, Pfeiffer⁴⁵ is of the opinion that it may well be a catechetical formulation of the wisdom writers, ca. 500 B. C.

The Israelite proposed an exaggerated sacrifice to restore fellowship, gain Yahweh's favor, and avert destruction. In opposition to this Micah urges an active ethical and moral life, a continuing process rather than a few isolated sacrificial acts. It is to be noted that this life centers in Yahweh. The moral and social activity and attitudes, justice and mercy, stem from walking humbly with God. Justice was God-given. Mercy includes not only the activity toward the fellow man, but also Yahweh's attitude toward man. Hence these three requirements presuppose a right relationship with Yahweh, inaugurated by Him. They do not create the relationship, but stem from it. Micah's religion is not fundamentally social, but theocentric, yet he found himself in a situation which caused him to stress the social and moral side of this relationship with Yahweh. For it was in the field of the moral and the

⁴³G. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

⁴⁴Isaiah 2:10-22 *et passim*.

⁴⁵Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

social that Israel had most misunderstood Yahweh, and thus displayed its defection from Him most vividly.

Not a few scholars have found in Micah's words a rejection of the validity of a cultic worship, especially sacrifice, for Yahweh's religion. Volz⁴⁶ holds that all the prophets, including Moses, decried the use of external cultus in the true religion. Sellin would not go so far, but of 6:8 exclaims, "Hier ist bereits auf dem Boden des alten Bundes selbst das Gesetz überwunden."⁴⁷ J. P. Hyatt comments on the prophets:

It seems to me beyond doubt that they were absolutely opposed to elaborate ritualism and sacrifice, and their religion excluded the worship of Yahweh in such a manner.⁴⁸

Others⁴⁹ feel that the prophets knew only the kind of sacrifice before them, sacrifice used as a bribe, and so advocated its abolition. Had they been able to imagine the purified post-exilic sacrifice, they would have allowed it. Not a few⁵⁰ lay down no absolute judgment because of the scanty material in Micah, which is especially scanty if 6:6-8 denied him, but suspect at the same time that Micah did intend to exclude sacrifice from the religion of Yahweh.

⁴⁶Paul Volz, Prophetenestalten des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1949), 16-17.

⁴⁷Ernst Sellin, Der Alttestamentliche Prophetismus (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912), p. 56.

⁴⁸Quoted by Coleran, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁹Christopher E. North, "Sacrifice in the Old Testament," The Expository Times, XLVII (March, 1936), 253.

⁵⁰Ernest Wright, The Old Testament against its Environment (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), p. 108; W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel (New York: The Macmillan Company, n.d.), p. 247; Sidney Jellicoe, "The Prophets and the Cultus," The Expository Times, LX (June, 1949), 258.

offered a sacrifice with proper attitudes. Furthermore, these verses need not be viewed as an exclusive either-or proposition. All that they need imply is that cultus is subordinate to, and not a substitute for, proper living. It is interesting to compare Deuteronomy 10:12:

And now Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee,
but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways,
and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all
thy heart and with all thy soul.

The similarity to 6:8 is striking, yet it in no way meant that the sacrifice discussed elsewhere in Deuteronomy was improper.

An examination of 6:6-7 shows that the attitude towards the purpose and value of sacrifices was faulty. Though animal sacrifices were included in the cultic legislation, and though there were examples of such large sacrifices, the final position of the suggestion of human sacrifice betrays an undue stress on the value of sacrifices. Yahweh was reduced to an arbitrary and demanding God from whom favor must be bought. Even these verses themselves appear to doubt the validity of such a transaction as being sufficient. The very suggestion lays bare the belief that proper sacrifice bound God to a certain course of action, in this case, granting forgiveness. Furthermore, sacrifice was viewed as the burden, if not the entirety of Yahweh's demands, Micah could not but condemn this bitterly.

Because of the Israelite's incorrect evaluation of sacrifice, the prophet's condemnation of the validity of his sacrifices does not indicate the prophet's opinion on all sacrifice. Many follow this line of reasoning.

Such passages as these do not contain any condemnation of sacrifice in itself; but only a condemnation

of the exaggerated weight laid on it by the people.⁵⁵

Another important factor is the purpose of the prophet, expressed in his own situation. To lead a people who very much misunderstood the desires of Yahweh to understand those desires, Micah would be quite likely to employ hyperbole or the negative in a relative sense.⁵⁶ To say, "not only sacrifices," the prophet said, "only ethical behavior." What Micah wished to repudiate was the idea that sacrifices was all that Yahweh wanted.⁵⁷

Allusions to the Cultus of Judah and Israel

The biblical record of contemporary times is also significant for the understanding of the attitudes which Micah had to overcome. A religious reformation took place during Hezekiah's reign. It is quite possible that this reform was in some part due to the activity of Micah.⁵⁸ The Assyrian opponent⁵⁹ taunted Hezekiah for removing the altars and high places, thus restricting worship to the temple in Jerusalem. This cleansing included the removal of $\text{D}^{\text{7}}\text{7}^{\text{4}}\text{8}$, and $\text{D}^{\text{7}}\text{7}^{\text{3}}\text{7}^{\text{2}}$, standard furniture in the dual-cult of the Canaanites. Not only cultic attitudes, but also cultic forms in Micah's time were false. It is perhaps noteworthy that a somewhat purified cultus continued to be used in the temple.

Micah implies in 5:13 that the people themselves used these Canaanite

⁵⁵ E. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament, edited by S. D. F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 251.

⁵⁶ ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁷ ibid., p. 160.

⁵⁸ ibid., p. 150; Leslie, op. cit., p. 144.

⁵⁹ Isaiah 36:17.

religious objects in their worship. The authenticity of this passage is again doubled by many,⁶⁰ but not as extensively as in the case of 6:6-8. Reputable modern scholars accept it.⁶¹ In fact, some who cut out almost all of chapters four and five retain 5:10-15, for it speaks woe on Jerusalem, quite in keeping with chapters 1-3.

Thy graven images also will I cut off,
and thy standing images out of the midst of thee;
and thou shalt no more worship
the work of thine hands.⁶²

The mention of idolatry is especially significant, for the worship of Yahweh under the form of an idol was one of the cardinal sins against Yahweh.⁶³ This would explain the emphatic language of 6:8, for if the cultus Micah witnessed was idolatrous, there is little doubt that he would use strong terms in attacking it.

There is some evidence, though inconclusive, that this idolatry was not only a misrepresentation of Yahweh, but worship of other gods. In 1:7 Micah attributes the impending fall of Samaria and Israel to her idolatry. The authenticity of this passage is also doubted.⁶⁴ That this, however, must be a later gloss interpreting the fall of Samaria as due to idolatry because idolatry was not viewed with such suspicion in Micah's time is, at best, a singular view. Hosea spoke clearly and finally a few years before.

⁶⁰Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

⁶¹Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 64; Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁶²5:13-14a.

⁶³Udleran, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

⁶⁴J. N. P. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 37; Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten
to pieces,
and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the
fire,
and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate:
for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot,
and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.⁶⁵

This description coincides with the case as Hosea saw it in Israel. Micah thus seen the cause of the fall of Samaria in this false fertility-cult idolatry; in 5:13 he intimates the same for Jerusalem. Thus the cultus and idolatry which Micah witnessed in Judah may have been not only a perversion of the Yahweh religion, but actually a cult dedicated to other gods. This would account for his silence about the validity of a pure cult. Before the people repented and returned to Yahweh, no sacrifice, not even that ostensibly to Yahweh, could be pleasing to Him.

There are other indications that the cultus of Judah may have been of a fertility-cult nature. The mention of hamoth, high places, in 1:5 is puzzling in view of the parallelism and the succeeding context. This would view Jerusalem as one of the high places which were normally associated with the Baal-cult and never with Jerusalem. Most commentators⁶⁶ read "sins" or "sin of the house" with the LXX.

Graham⁶⁷ and Leslie after him,⁶⁸ find evidence of fertility nature-cults in Micah's address to the towns in 1:8-16. Graham interprets this passage in

⁶⁵1:7.

⁶⁶J. H. P. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁶⁷Williams Creighton Graham, "Some suggestions toward the Interpretation of Micah 1:10-16," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, XLVII (July, 1931), 237-258. Unless otherwise noted all material in this and the succeeding paragraphs is taken from this work.

⁶⁸Leslie, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196.

a cultic rather than an historical background. The term סַבְּיָיִם , inhabitant, occurs no less than five times. This is usually interpreted collectively,⁶⁹ to indicate the people who inhabit the towns. Graham follows another usage,⁷⁰ that denoting an office or title, as סַבְּיָיִם , preacher.⁷¹ Here this term would indicate a female office holder. The passage would be a sarcastic and contemptuous apostrophe to the mother-goddesses of the fertility cult of the towns. This technical usage of the term סַבְּיָיִם is not found in Hebrew elsewhere, but is found in the Sumerian and Babylonian languages.

Another nature-cult term is סַבְּיָיִם , "to go forth in religious procession." The Iachish cult apparently used horses and chariots⁷² in such processions. סַבְּיָיִם , weep,⁷³ and סַבְּיָיִם , lamentation,⁷⁴ are technical terms used for the ritual wailing in the cult. סַבְּיָיִם , wait carefully (AV),⁷⁵ may come from the root סַבְּיָיִם , to whirl or dance, another important part of the nature-cult ceremony. סַבְּיָיִם , dust,⁷⁶ in the Syriac is no ordinary dust, but the dust of the threshing floor. Tearing the hair,⁷⁷

⁶⁹Gesenius, op. cit., section 122s.

⁷⁰ibid., section 122r.

⁷¹McC. 1:2 et passim.

⁷²1:13.

⁷³1:10.

⁷⁴1:12.

⁷⁵1:12.

⁷⁶1:10.

⁷⁷1:16.

was a part of the ritual wailing.⁷⁸

Such elaborate sarcasm is not at all unimaginable in the mouth of the prophet. This very section is usually interpreted as just such an elaborate system of puns on the names of the towns. It is possible that Micah may have had such cultic terms in mind, considering that this section follows the mention of the Samaritan cult. Further archaeological study may lend more weight to this ingenious interpretation. If this passage has a cultic background, or both a cultic and an historical setting, this would give further evidence that Micah did not think only of cultus in 6:8, but of a specific and false cultus.

Micah's attitude toward the temple in Jerusalem is also noteworthy. He prophesied its destruction in no uncertain terms.⁷⁹ The oppressing leaders placed much confidence in the temple as Yahweh's inviolable dwelling place. Yet this could not overrule their immoral grasping conduct. They were to be punished; Jerusalem and the temple along with it would be destroyed. This undoubtedly appeared to be blasphemy to many. In this connection Eber quotes an interesting section of the Ras Shamra tablets to show how important it was for a Semitic deity to have a house. "I bring you good tidings, Baal," cries the Goddess Anath, 'a house is appointed you, as your brothers have them!'"⁸⁰ The destruction of the temple would necessitate the cessation of all sacrifices. Since this is viewed as a punishment, it does not necessarily condemn all sacrifice as such.⁸¹ Neither does it explicitly indicate,

⁷⁸Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁷⁹9-12.

⁸⁰Eber, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁸¹Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

however, that Micah would have allowed a purified cultus.

The immediately succeeding oracle in 4:1-4 speaks of the glorified Zion of the future. All nations would come to Zion in peace to learn the ways of God. This complete change in the prophetic attitude, coupled with the fact that this very same oracle is found in Is. 2:1-4, has been the occasion of denying this to Micah. Weiser, however, comments:

Der Ernst der prophetischen Gerichtandrohung wird durch das Wort der Verheissung nicht aufgehoben, sondern vorausgesetzt; Gericht und Heil ergeben in alttestamentlichen Gesamtverständnis erst in ihrem tieferen Zusammenhang das Ganze der göttlichen Weltführung.⁸²

Nevertheless, Weiser considers this passage and its counter-part in Isaiah to fit neither prophet, and so assigns it to an anonymous prophet, possibly post-exilic. This has been the habit of many scholars,⁸³ though few assign this text to any specific person or age with an air of finality. A few consider it to have been an original part of Micah's prophecy, originating either with him or Isaiah.⁸⁴ J. H. P. Smith⁸⁵ finds a Deuteronomic implication that the temple at Jerusalem was the only authorized sanctuary of Yahweh. Needless to say, this could only be true if the Deuteronomists were the only ones to hold that the temple was a better, or the only, authorized sanctuary. Micah himself could well have considered the temple as the sanctuary par excellence. If this passage is from Micah, we may conclude that Micah did

⁸²Weiser, op. cit., p. 234.

⁸³For a full treatment of the various views see J. H. P. Smith, op. cit., p. 84; and G. A. Smith, op. cit., pp. 365-367.

⁸⁴Procksch, op. cit., p. 114.

⁸⁵J. H. P. Smith, op. cit., p. 86.

envision a pure cultus. While there is no mention here of sacrifice, the very thought of a temple could hardly not connote some sort of cultus, probably including a form of sacrifice.⁸⁶ Then 6:8 will not be interpreted absolutely, but relatively. However this interpretation of 6:8 does not stand or fall with the authenticity of 4:1-5.

Very few have found another reference to the temple in Jerusalem in 1:2. Were this the case, Micah's entire prophecy would be substantiated as the Word of Yahweh, who dwelt in the temple. It would then be a call to the proper worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem. This is dubious, for the succeeding verses point rather to the heavenly temple of Yahweh.⁸⁷ Weiser suspects an echo of Micah's original call here, similar to that of Isaiah, and notes the cultic overtones of the passage.

Wenn in V.3 davon die Rede ist, dass Gott 'Herabkommt', so scheint Micha hier die Epiphanie Gottes vom himmlischen Heiligtum her im Auge zu haben, die den Höhepunkt des Festkultes bildete, und hier vielleicht eine ähnliche Situation voraussetzt wie Jes. 6.⁸⁸

Micah's oracles against the prophets and priests have been noted as important. He denounces both violently, but with neither does he direct his polemic against their function, whatever that may have been, but only against the abuse of their office.⁸⁹ If no sacrificial system was compatible

⁸⁶Coleran, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

⁸⁷Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 208; Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

⁸⁸Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

⁸⁹A. E. Johnson, "The Prophet in Israelite Worship," *The Expository Times*, XLVII (April, 1936), 315.

with Yahweh, one would expect that the condemnation of the priests would have included this.⁹⁰ This argumentum ex silentio is not decisive, yet it is noteworthy. Micah also, along with the other prophets, prophesied against ruler, priest, prophet, and temple, yet did not advocate their abolition. The same can be inferred concerning his prophecy against cultus.

Conclusion

The question remains, if Micah would have allowed a purified cultus, what was that?

It is probable that the ritual was valued in the main for the ideas which it expressed. The particular details, e. g., what animals were to be sacrificed . . . would be left in the main indefinite.⁹¹

Actually, as in the case of Amos and Hosea, Micah did not direct himself to matters of cultus per se or of future cultus. The coming destruction of Jerusalem was again viewed as imminent, and we may presume that Micah did not take the long-range view, with the exception of 4:1-5, where he does speak of a future temple.

The entire question concerning Micah's attitude to cultus is confused considerably by the doubts cast on the authenticity of the relevant texts. Yet whichever texts are considered genuine, there is no conclusive evidence that forces the view that Micah opposed ritual per se. The final conclusion must be similar to that which was reached above in the case of Amos and Hosea. Micah came with a call from Yahweh to preach repentance to a people who had

⁹⁰Owen H. Gates, "The Relation of Priests to Sacrifice before the Exile," Journal of Biblical Literature, XXVII (1908), 81.

⁹¹Davidson, op. cit., p. 252.

rebelled against Him. Everything that hindered this repentance was condemned. Nicah's slight concern over future worship proves nothing more than that he believed that there were weightier matters of the law than sacrifice. To insist that he was opposed to ritual, or would have been completely indifferent to it in normal times, forces something into this message beyond an objective interpretation.

and called for a return to Torah.

They agreed also in their condemnation of the culture which they preferred to be completely out of harmony with Torah's will, and therefore detrimental to the physical and spiritual welfare of Israel and Judah. This worship was harmful because it was used as the whole rather than a part of the God-given life. Further, it appears that for some the cultus became almost the object of their trust, rather than Torah. It was both a symptom and a cause of their defection from Torah. For this defection they would experience the wrath of Torah, in the invading hosts, the prophetic denunciations, and the exile and return of the land. Thus for the prophets was in substantial agreement.

As the text stands, Amos and Hosea showed their concern primarily for their social side, and incidentally for their ethnic side. On the other hand, Micah draws to the heart of the problem, and denounces the idolatry and the fertility-cult elements in their religion. Micah also mentions the fertility cult in connection with Israel but does not make a great deal of it in the case of Judah.

It appears quite surprising that Amos and Hosea could both present so substantially the same people, and yet give such a different picture of the religious culture. True, there is no contradiction, but the fertility cult and idolatry which play so large a part in the message of Amos are not clear-

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Several points of similarity and contrast in the messages of Amos, Hosea, and Micah merit notice in conclusion. All three prophets were messengers of repentance. In a single chorus they condemned the people, and called for a return to Yahweh.

They agreed also in their condemnation of the cultus which they considered to be completely out of harmony with Yahweh's will, and therefore detrimental to the physical and spiritual welfare of Israel and Judah. This worship was harmful because it was used as the whole rather than a part of the God-pleasing life. Further, it appears that for some the cultus became almost the object of their trust, rather than Yahweh. It was both a symptom and a cause of their defection from Yahweh. For this defection they would experience the wrath of Yahweh, in the invading hosts who, the prophets announced, would overrun and pillage the land. Thus far the prophets are in substantial agreement.

As has been noted, Amos and Micah scored their hearers primarily for their social sins, and incidentally for their cultic sins. On the other hand, Hosea drove to the heart of the problem, and denounced the idolatry and the fertility-cult elements in their religion. Micah also mentions the fertility cult in connection with Israel but does not make a great issue of it in the case of Judah.

It appears quite surprising that Amos and Hosea could both preach to substantially the same people, and yet give such a different picture of the existing cultus. True, there is no contradiction, but the fertility cult and idolatry which play so large a part in the message of Hosea are not clear-

ly mentioned by Amos. It is no surprise therefore that scholars of a naturalistic bent, even some who appear to be pious Christians, should contend that Amos and Hosea had markedly different religious views on cultus. Most Old Testament books consider idolatry and Baalism to be among the cardinal sins. Why Amos and Micah should not make something of them cannot be adequately explained on the basis of the texts they have left us. Perhaps the answer lies in their differing purposes. Perhaps the texts we have are not an adequate sampling of their messages. If that were the case, then we could not hope to reconstruct their theology in any degree of completeness.

The most surprising omission of all, in our mind, is the fact that Hosea alone mentions written laws including ceremonial rules that are considered binding on the chosen people. Amos knows of a universal moral law, which all nations are bound to obey. Micah knows of moral obligations to Yahweh which Yahweh had revealed to men (6:8), and speaks of the glorious future when Yahweh's Torah will go forth from Zion. Yet Hosea alone implies a ceremonial law and a written body of laws. What was the prophets' opinion of the Pentateuch? Why do they not point to it as Yahweh's established rule and so clearly and simply substantiate their accusations? We do not mean to criticise the method of these God-inspired men, but we cannot think of a better argument for their message than the Pentateuchal legislation. It might be noted in passing also that Amos 5:25, while capable of interpretation in harmony with the Pentateuch, still remains peculiar enough to raise some questions concerning Amos' familiarity with the Pentateuch.

In the final analysis it must be remembered above all else that these men were called to minister to a certain people. However, the fact that they spoke to the problems of their own day does not in any way invalidate their value to us. For they spoke by the call of the Unchanging One, and

so speak also to us. We of the Church, in particular, cannot lightly pass by as antiquaria their messages, incomplete as they may be to construct a Dogmatics. The prophets were not speaking to pagans, but to the chosen people, the Church. It would be a Satanic nearsightedness to believe that the New Testament Church could never fall as the Old Testament Church often did. The prophets' call is not only to be read with scholarly eyes, but with repentant eyes. For indeed, that is their message, "Repent!"

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