

REVOLUTION OR REGENERATION

Amos 5:24

INTRODUCTION

I. MAN'S REDEMPTION, TRANSFORMATION, REGENERATION IS TO BE ACTED OUT OR EXPRESSED IN SOCIAL RELATIONS

A. God created man; He created this world order

1. He has not abdicated His sovereignty over this order
2. He maintains His sovereignty and moral government by holding the world responsible to His revealed Will

B. All men and nations are responsible to God for moral uprightness and just social behavior

1. The O.T. prophets spoke principles and guidelines for social relations which are as relevant today as they were 2500 years ago . . .
2. These same principles are amplified and confirmed by Jesus Christ and His apostles

II. GOD'S WORD JUDGES EVERY HUMAN CULTURE AND INSTITUTION

A. The U.S.S.R AND CHINA are as much "under God" as the U.S.A., because God is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. HE TRANSCENDS ALL POWERS AS WELL AS ALL THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN ABILITIES, INSTITUTIONS AND NATIONS. HE IS THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE

1. Cf. Amos 1-2; Isaiah 13-23; Jer., Ezek., ect. Daniel
2. "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me . . ." Jer. 27:5

III. PRIVILEGE BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY

A. If God expected so much of Israel and Judah in Amos' day in social justice because they were witnesses of the One True God,

B. How much more does he require of U.S.A. since we have so long had the glorious gospel and providential grace of God in material means?!

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IV. GOD'S WAY OF BRINGING ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

- A. He did not call upon Israel to send a Senate Investigation Committee to discover the causes and recommend cures for the nations problem—HE REVEALED IT . . . SIN WAS THE CAUSE . . . REPENTANCE THE CURE
- B. He did not send a Ph.D., an URBANOLOGIST, SOCIOLOGIST, OR SHEEPHERDER AND FRUITPICKER TO SIMPLY DECLARE WITH CONVICTION AND CLARITY THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD!
- C. God did not call upon Israel's government to provide a massive welfare war on poverty, to pass a sword-control bill. He called upon them to obey the Divine Law
 1. Amos did not preach civil disobedience to the poor, he preached obedience to God to all
 2. Israel did not need a great politician, organizer, economist, legislator . . . SHE NEEDED A GREAT PREACHER, A HEARLD OF THE TRUTH, A CONSCIENCE-STABBING CRYER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, A WARRIOR OF THE FAITH!

SO THIS MAN AMOS, NOT A PROFESSIONAL CLERGYMAN, NOT A SIGN-CARRYING RIOTER, NOT AN ORGANIZER OF MARCHES . . . BUT A MAN ALL ALONE, WHO BELIEVED GOD AND HAD THE COURAGE TO PREACH GOD'S MESSAGE, HAS A RELEVANT MESSAGE FOR OUR SOCIETY TODAY!

DISCUSSION

I. THE SOCIAL SICKNESS OF ISRAEL'S DECADENT SOCIETY CLOSELY PARALLELS THAT OF OUR OWN

- A. "They have forgotten how to do right, says the Lord. They maintain their palaces by the fruit of violence and robbery." Phillips, Amos 3:10
 1. Violence and crime in our world is at an appalling level!
 2. 15 yr. olds commit more serious crimes than any other age group; 1/6 boy is referred to the juvenile court; in 1965 more than 2 million Americans were sentenced to prison; 40% of all male children will be arrested sometime in their lives for something more serious than traffic violations; 3 million crimes reported in 1965 while in some places only 1/10th of certain crimes are reported
 3. In all large cities no one is safe on the streets after dark; THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE ADVOCATING THE BURNING DOWN OF CITIES, RIOTING, CIVIL REVOLUTION! Gangs of wild, thrill-seeking, cruel, cold-blooded boys and girls roam the streets, even of Joplin!

4. Organized Crime like the Mafia, etc., control great institutions and organizations and often city governments and political parties!
- B. Indulgent luxury and sensual excess; ". . . at ease in Zion lying upon beds of ivory, eat lambs from the flock . . . sing idle songs . . . drink wine in bowls . . . anoint themselves with finest oils . . ." Amos 6:1-6a
 1. Indulgence and excess is rampant all over the world among the rich and poor, in every realm possible
 2. Indulgence in building expensive homes and clothes
 3. Excess in eating, obesity, have to take pills, etc.
 4. Excessive indulgence in frivolity, recreation, etc.
 5. Excess in alcohol are ruining us. Yale School of Alcohol Studies, drinking cause of 20% of all divorces, 25% of all insanity, 37% of all poverty, 47% of all child misery, 50% of all crimes, 50% of all traffic deaths; industry loses 60 million man hours and 1 billion a year in wages due to alcohol absenteeism; Hoover says 5 billion a year is spent to combat crime due to liquor drinking. This is 1 billion more than total revenue received by federal government for liquor sold!!!
 6. We have so indulged in sex it is openly perverted . . . homosexual wedding performed in Rotterdam by catholic priest . . . plays on Broadway now have naked women and men on stage and roaming through audience . . . a movie about the love of two lesbians for one another is being shown in New York.

In one play, Time describes, "In full light, and facing the audience, the unclothed heroine knelt on a table throughout the play as a symbol of passive white idealism. A fully dressed Negro, symbolizing angry black nationalism, devours her." THE DECADENT CANAANITE, GREEK AND ROMAN THEATRES HAD NOTHING ON THOSE OF U.S.A.!

7. We indulgently pay money to see such things . . . corrupt-minded movie stars make millions of dollars off indulgent society . . . sports heroes are paid fabulous salaries . . . so-called entertainers are millionaires over night simply for sitting and spouting obscenities on the T.V.
- C. Oppression of the poor: ". . . cows of Bashan, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy . . . trample the poor . . . afflict the righteous, turn aside the needy . . ." (cf. 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-6)

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1. Like it or not there are people all over the world who make their living by oppressing the poor . . . yes, even here in Joplin
 2. Loan sharks; those who exploit people by bring young girls into prostitution to escape poverty; criminals who exploit the poor by selling them numbers or other forms of gambling; people who pay less than fair wages simply because of a persons color or nationality
 3. Like it or not some people in America have been denied the opportunities others have simply because they were black-skinned, were Mexican nationality, were poorly dressed, etc. I have lived in the South, and the West and the North and it is all the same! Greed, prejudice, SIN causes men to oppress one another!
 4. GOD WILL NOT HOLD THE OPPRESSORS OF THE POOR GUILTYLESS . . . NEITHER WILL HE HOLD GUILTYLESS THOSE WHO KNOW IT AND DO NOTHING ABOUT IT! ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO OUGHT TO BE REGENERATING SOCIETY BY PREACHING REPENTANCE TO THE OPPRESSORS, AND HOPE TO THE OPPRESSED!
- D. Perverting Justice and Righteousness: "O you who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth . . . you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe . . . they hate him who reproves in the gate . . . abhor him who speaks the truth" (5:7, 10, 12)
1. Convicted criminals go unpunished because of political pressures on courts and judges or because of outright bribes
 2. Looters encouraged to rob, destroy because politicians want votes
 3. Rich and influential able to get by with flouting tax laws, and other laws the poor and middle class would not
 4. International criminals violate our sovereignty and we do nothing
 5. Our boys dying in V.N. while our so-called allies ship our enemies food and arms
 6. Those who stand for truth, justice, law and order, smeared as fanatics, extremists
- E. Apathy—Indifference ". . . but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph . . ." 6:6b
1. None seem to have the courage to speak out against evil and in favor of righteousness

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2. Too many have it too good . . . and those who do not have it so good want to change the situation only in terms of materialistic values!

Rolland Steever says in Christian Standard, July 6, 1968, Christ in the Ghettos . . . "We cannot turn our faces away and fearfully hope that this situation will go away. It will not!"

3. People have made sin respectable by euphemizing it . . . the godless liquor traffic is now called "tavern, grill, night-club, cocktail lounge." Drunkenness is called "illness of alcoholism." Youthful crime is called "juvenile delinquency". Pornography is called "realism," Divorce and sexual promiscuity are recommended as producing maturity for later marital relations, immodest dress is called "fashionable." Dope addition is called "escapeism."

- 4 10 or 12 people stand by and watch a pregnant school teacher attacked and raped in Kansas City. Others watch while a gang kick an old man to death in New York park.

LEGISLATORS AND JUSTICES SEEM UNCONCERNED OR PARALYZED BY FEAR TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE MORAL ANARCHY EXCEPT VOTE MORE MONEY HANDOUTS AS RANSOMS

POLITICIANS HAVE PROPOSED EVERY PANACEA POSSIBLE AND ALL THEIR SCHEMES ONLY ADD MORE PROBLEMS TO THE PROBLEM SCIENCE'S SOLUTIONS ARE SUPERFICIAL AND SHALLOW

EDUCATION IS EXTRANEIOUS AND IRRELEVANT TO THE PREDICAMENT

WHAT ARE WE TO DO? WHERE ARE WE TO TURN? WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

II. THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S DECADENCE PARALLELS OUR OWN

A. Psychiatrist Carl Jung, in a letter to E. Stanley Jones, wrote, "Those psychiatrists who are not superficial have come to the conclusion that the vast neurotic misery of the world could be termed a neurosis of emptiness. Men cut themselves off from the root of their being, from God, and then life turns empty, meaningless, without purpose. So when God goes, goal goes. When goal goes, meaning goes. When meaning goes, value goes, and life turns dead on our hands."

B. Sidney Cave, in his book, "The Christian Way," says "Right and wrong are, for many, words which have ceased to have any intelligible content, and the sense of liberation from the restrictions of traditional morality has brought not the joy of freedom but

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the *malaise* which comes from lives lived without aim or meaning. We are all aware of the psychic injury suffered by a child if he finds that the one he has trusted as his father is not his father. That is the plight of many in the modern world. They have lost their heavenly Father and feel not liberated, but merely insecure . . . Many have lost the sense of a father's care but not the sense of need."

- C. Time, April 26, 1968, in an article on American authors, says they are "viewing the world as a lunatic comedy . . . they work from an assumption that society is at best malevolent and stupid, at worst wholly lunatic. The gods are dead and their graves untended, morality is a matter of picking one's way between competing absurdities, and the only sane reaction to society—to its alleged truths and virtues, its would-be terrors and taboos—is a cackle or a scream of possibly cathartic laughter"

WHAT IS THE CAUSE? "MEN HAVE CUT THEMSELVES OFF FROM THE ROOT OF THEIR BEING, GOD . . . THEY HAVE LOST THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER . . . THE GODS ARE DEAD . . ."

D. ISRAEL'S ROAD TO RUIN WAS PAVED WITH UNBELIEF, IDOLATRY, RITUALISM

1. ". . . because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes . . ." 2:4
2. THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR LIES—2:4
". . . but their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked."

OUR NATION IS FILLED WITH POLITICAL LEADERS, INDUSTRIAL LEADERS, YES, EVEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO HAVE REJECTED THE WORD OF GOD . . . THEY HAVE SCORNEO ITS ETHICAL PRECEPTS AS BEING IRRELEVANT . . . THEY HAVE EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR THE SATANIC INSPIRED LIES OF HUMANISM, AND EVOLUTIONISM.

3. The Israelites in Amos' day were worshipping idols, golden-calves, star-gods and other images at Bethel and Dan (cf. 3:14; 5:25-27)

AND OUR NATION HAS ITS IDOLS AND IMAGES TO WHICH THEY PAY OBEDIENCE . . . MOVIE STARS, ENTERTAINERS, SPORTS, TELEVISION, AUTOMOBILES, HOUSES, POLITICIANS, PHILOSOPHERS, THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR!

WE HAVE OUR SHRINES, THE MOVIE HOUSE, THE NIGHTCLUBS, THE STADIUMS, POLITICAL RALLIES, WHERE THERE ARE SET RITUALS WE ALL GO THROUGH, LAKESIDES, ETC.

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4. Ritualism ". . . bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days . . . proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel."
4:4-5

10 years ago in Christian Standard, Jan J. Erteszak said, in an article "From Asylum to Powerhouse" 12-5-59 . . . "Our churches are increasing in membership and material well-being at an unprecedented rate. Religion has become popular. But, almost in inverse proportion to its popularity, it is losing its central place of commitment in the lives of the people." YES, WE HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO GO TO CHURCH AND GO THROUGH THE RITUALS . . . THEY LOVE TO DO THIS . . . IT SALVES THE CONSCIENCE . . . BUT GOD AND HIS WORD DOES NOT PERMEATE THEIR EVERYDAY LIVING!

THIS IS THE CAUSE . . . IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CAUSE OF EVERY SOCIETY WHICH HAS PERISHED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH . . . REJECTION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD'S REVEALED WORD!!!

EGYPT DID NOT DIE FROM LACK OF WEALTH OR POWER!

OLD BABYLON DID NOT DIE FROM LACK OF EDUCATION OR CULTURE!

ASSYRIA DID NOT DIE FOR LACK OF MILITARY MIGHT!

THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE WAS THE RICHEST ON EARTH!

PERSIA WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

GREECE WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

ROME WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

AND ON AND ON ONE MIGHT GO . . . NONE OF THEM WERE OVERTHROWN AS A RESULT OF ATTEMPTS BY ENSLAVED PEOPLE THYING TO HAVE A DEMOCRACY . . . SO DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS OF NO ASSURANCE OF PERPETUATION OF SOCIETY!

ALL SOCIETIES, GOVERNMENTS, PEOPLES, INDIVIDUALS STAND OR FALL ACCORDING TO THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE MORAL GOVERNMENT!

MORAL ANARCHY BREEDS POLITICAL ANARCHY . . . WHICH WILL IN TURN PRODUCE POLITICAL DICTATORSHIP AND MORAL DICTATORSHIP.

IT IS PRAGMATICALLY PROVEN CORRECT . . . A PERSON OR A NATION CAN ONLY BE FREE SPIRITUALLY, MORALLY, AND POLITICALLY IF IT KNOWS AND DOES THE TRUTH OF GOD!

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III. THE CURE FOR ISRAEL'S DECADENCE IS THE SAME CURE NEEDED TODAY . . . REGENERATION

- A. Cecil Todd said in his last Revival Fires magazine, "Our nation has strayed from God! Our problem is not the color of people's skin: our problem is the color of people's hearts. The heart of our problem is the problem of our hearts! Our problem is not the poverty-stricken ghettos—the slum areas; our problem, rather, is the poverty-stricken souls—the slums of people's hearts . . . What we need in this country more than a war on poverty is a war on sin."
- B. Amos said it this way: "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord the God of hosts will be with you . . . Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate . . . let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." 5:14-15, 23-24
- C. The prophets taught and Jesus confirmed that all social morality finds its roots, its spiritual source and compelling power over the consciences of men in the character of God Himself. To seek God is to seek good; to love God is to love good, and, conversely, to hate evil because God hates evil.
1. The solution is even as it was in the days of Jeremiah . . . restoration of the old paths wherein is the good way (Jer. 6:16-21) . . . the solution is REGENERATION, not REVOLUTION.
 2. Social injustice cannot be corrected by simply renovation and reorganization of the social structure. NO MATTER WHICH POLITICAL PARTY REORGANIZES!
 3. Social injustice can only be overcome when men are recreated in the image of God. SOCIETY WILL NEVER BE CHANGED EXCEPT AS INDIVIDUAL MEN ARE CHANGED! AND MEN WILL NEVER BE CHANGED UNTIL THEY ARE UNITED WITH GOD THROUGH HIS REVELATION WHICH IN THESE DAYS IS MADE IN HIS INCARNATE SON
- D. The FAITHFULNESS OF GOD is the great motivating power appealed to by the prophets. GOD HAS KEPT HIS PROMISES IN THE PAST . . . HE WILL KEEP THEM IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE!!
1. History is appealed to.
 2. So, what God did through Jesus Christ in time and in history is confirmation of the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (II Cor. 1:20) . . .

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THIS BECOMES THE BASIS OF MORALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, EVERYTHING . . . BECAUSE IT IS THROUGH THESE EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES THAT WE ARE ABLE TO ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD AND BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE . . . REGENERATED (II Pet. 1:3-4)

CONCLUSION

WHAT THEN CAN THE CHURCH DO IN OUR AGE OF SOCIAL UPHEAVAL . . . HOW IS THE CHURCH TO BE INVOLVED . . . HOW MAY IT BE MADE RELEVANT FOR THIS GENERATION?

I. THE CHURCH MUST START BY OUT-COMMITTING THOSE WHO, BY THEIR OWN ADMISSION, ARE DETERMINED TO DESTROY OUR SOCIETY

A. A committed church is a fellowship of believers which accepts the following premises and acts upon them:

1. The basic teachings of Christ are universal in time, space, and every situation of life . . . as significant in London, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Peking as U.S.A.
2. They are just as pertinent to our interdependent and complex society of today as they were in the first century
3. They are applicable to the totality of our problems—business, home, public life, international relations
4. Those who practice the Christian precepts in their daily lives are blessed themselves while, at the same time, they bring blessings to their society.

B. The church must come to grips with the following tasks:

1. Of involving men in her message for today and in her activity . . . SHOWING MEN THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS RELEVANT FOR THEIR PROBLEMS . . . EVANGELIZE THOSE WHO ARE SEARCHING TODAY
2. Become skillful in building a lasting conviction in its members. WE MUST CONVINCE MEN THAT CHRIST'S RULE OF LOVE REALLY WORKS . . . THAT IT WILL ENRICH THEM IN THE GREATEST POSSIBLE WAY . . . SPIRITUALLY
3. It must learn to generate commitment in its entire membership . . . IN A COMMITTED CHURCH THERE ARE NO SPECTATORS: EVERYONE IS A PARTICIPANT . . . EVERYONE HAS A TASK

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THE CHURCH CAN ONLY IMPART WHAT IT POSSESSES, AND THE EXTENT OF ITS INFLUENCE WILL DEPEND ON THE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS, THE SPIRITUAL MUSCLE, THE DEPTH OF CONVICTION, AND THE WILLINGNESS TO WITNESS OF THOSE WHO ARE FULLY COMMITTED.

IT IS USUALLY AT THE CROSSROADS OF DESTINY THAT REAL PROGRESS IS AFFECTED. WE ARE AT SUCH A CROSSROAD. IF WE UNDERTAKE TO BRING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO GRIPS WITH THE 20TH CENTURY, WE CAN, AND WE WILL CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF DISSOLUTION WHICH IS NOW IN THE MAKING

II. IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU AND WITH ME AS INDIVIDUALS

TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS NOT SO MUCH DOING THIS OR THAT, BUT ALLOWING GOD TO CREATE IN YOU HIS OWN IMAGE—JESUS CHRIST!

NATIONS MAY CRUMBLE, BUT GOD'S PROMISES ARE CERTAIN TO ENDURE!!



"That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches . . ." (Amos 6:4). Ivory plaques, often inlaid with gold and precious stones, decorated with cherubs and religious motifs of foreign origin, have been found by the hundred at Megiddo and Samaria. They testify to the luxury and extravagance of the upper classes in Israel in the first half of the eighth century B. C., against which the Prophet Amos thundered in vain.